17
BAKEMONOGATARI
OH!GREAT
Original Story:
NISIOISIN
Original Character
Design: VOFAN

マッキー
ink
PILOT
オレは…
カタバミだ

BAKEMONOGATARI

OH!GREAT

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17

MAIN CHARACTERS

Koyomi Araragi

A boy and a "mockery of a vampire." He feels that he owes his life to Hanekawa to the point that he wants to die for her.

Tsubasa Hanekawa

Koyomi's classmate, and an honor student that few honors could sufficiently describe. She grew up under harrowing circumstances and a complex family situation.

Black Hanekawa

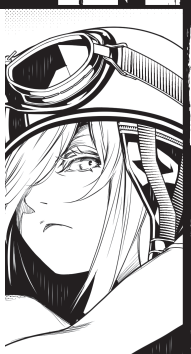
The aberration known as an Afflicting Cat, or *sawarineko*, which has manifested in Hanekawa.

Mèmè Oshino

A self-described expert on aberrations. Now temporarily based out of the town of Naoetsu, he often agrees to speak with Koyomi about his problems.

Shinobu Oshino

Once called the "king of aberrations," she is now a husk of a vampire. Her existence is bound by her new name.



Tuesday, June 13. The aberration known as the Afflicting Cat has suddenly appeared in front of Koyomi Araragi under the name of Black Hanekawa. An issue thought to have been solved during Golden Week has now re-appeared—the deep and dark feelings secretly held by Tsubasa Hanekawa. Koyomi recalls the wild Golden Week he spent trying to save Hanekawa by freeing her from this burden. Now, those feelings have resurfaced in an even stronger and tougher form, but what will Koyomi do to save her this time...?

Chapter 5

Tsubasa Cat

BOOK DESIGN VEIA

The choice of our *meeting spot*...
...really doesn't matter.
Every-thing I need to do is already done.
All that's left now—is to wait.
F

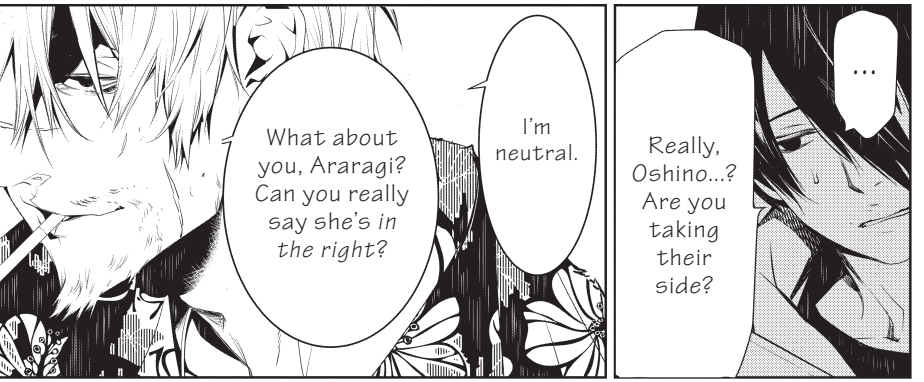
E
F
G
H
I

30 minutes earlier.
Araragi. Before you fight this cat,
I want to tell you something interesting I heard.
I thought they would've been...in a lot worse shape.
!!
Oh, huh.
In any case... I went to hear a bit of what those two had to say.
NAOETSU GENERAL HOSPITAL
It's about Missy Class President's parents.
They're actually out of the hospital already.
PARKING AVAILABLE
NAOETSU GENERAL HOSPITAL Parking Information
Parking Fees
Patients (including attendants)
3+ hours: 100 yen / 30 minutes
Visitors and others going to the hospital
Enter between 6:30-18:30 on weekdays
+ hours: 100 yen / 30 minutes
Enter on weekdays at other times / Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays
+ hours: 100 yen / 30 minutes

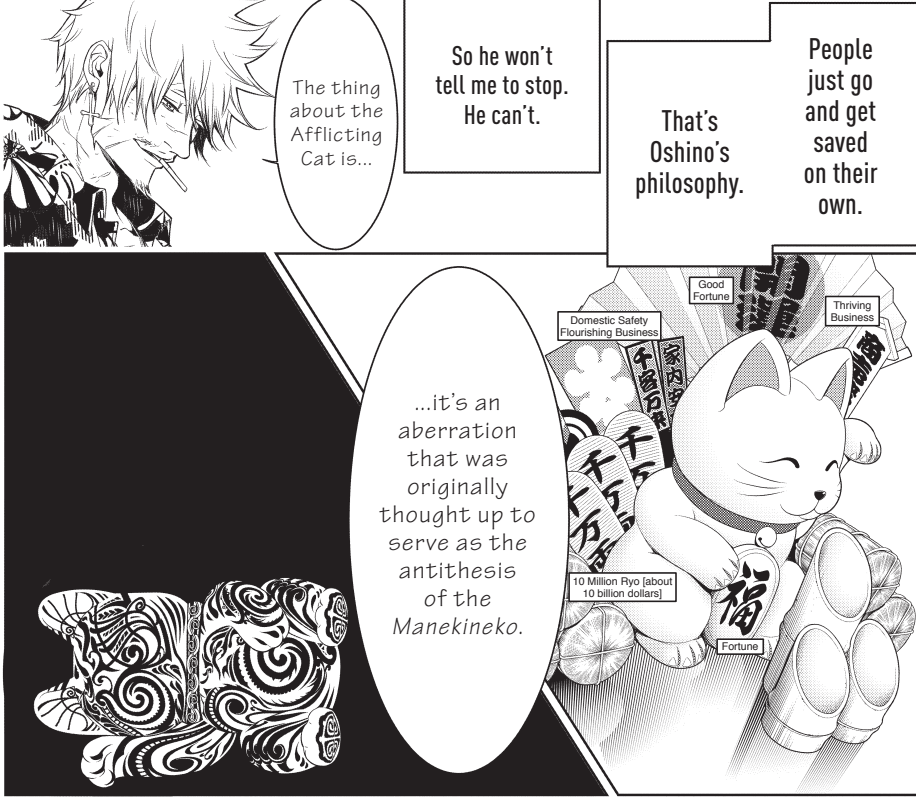
KRAK
About when... that incident happened.
So, here's the thing. After her father hit her...
...what do you think she said to him?
You shouldn't do that, Father.
You mustn't punch girls in the face.

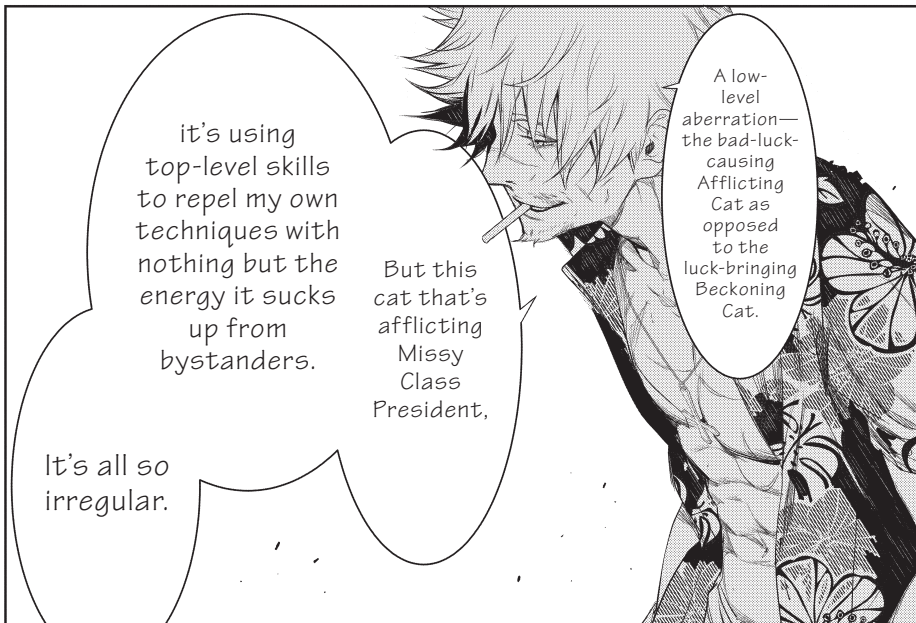
Creepy, isn't it?
That's scarier than an aberration.
Even I'd hit a kid like that.
...H-Hanekawa is...
Of course.
Looking back on it—I understand.
...always right.
That's... who Hanekawa is.
It was Hell—one where they were constantly being confronted ...
...with their own ugliness and immaturity.
GA-KRAK
大正義
Absolutely Correct
She was always showing them what it meant to be absolutely right—up close and personal, and all under the same roof.
You could even say it was out of fear.

It was like they'd been *forced* to raise a monster. I almost gotta hand it to them for putting up with that for ten-plus years.
But it makes you wonder, *which side is the real victim here?*
Her parents *feared* her from the bottom of their hearts—which is why they tried to *avoid all contact* with her.


…
Really, Oshino…? Are you taking their side?
I'm neutral.
What about you, Araragi? Can you really say she's *in the right?*

I'm sure her parents have their own side, or…
Well… I dunno… It's complicated.
I knew why Oshino was telling me this…
…at this moment in time.
Oshino was trying to do something to stop me.


The thing about the Afflicting Cat is...
So he won't tell me to stop. He can't.
That's Oshino's philosophy.
People just go and get saved on their own.
...it's an aberration that was originally thought up to serve as the antithesis of the Manekineko.
Good Fortune
Thriving Business
Domestic Safety Flourishing Business
10 Million Ryo [about 10 billion dollars]
Fortune


A low-level aberration—the bad-luck-causing Afflicting Cat as opposed to the luck-bringing Beckoning Cat.
But this cat that's afflicting Missy Class President,
it's using top-level skills to repel my own techniques with nothing but the energy it sucks up from bystanders.
It's all so irregular.

The cat afflicting her is an aberration that only exists inside her—you see.
In other words, this is a new breed. *Understand, Araragi?*
Even I don't know of an aberration like this.
That's who she's always been.
Catastrophe
Misfortune
She curses them with a dark, catastrophic sorrow.
To those who would give her affection, she brings affliction.
...You're giving me the urge to kill.
That's enough. Could you just stop?
Oshino.
She's the only one to blame here. Even you during spring break—
If it's the latter, then you've still got some *decency* in you—
Or are you talking about Missy Class President?
Oh? Is that me you wanna kill?

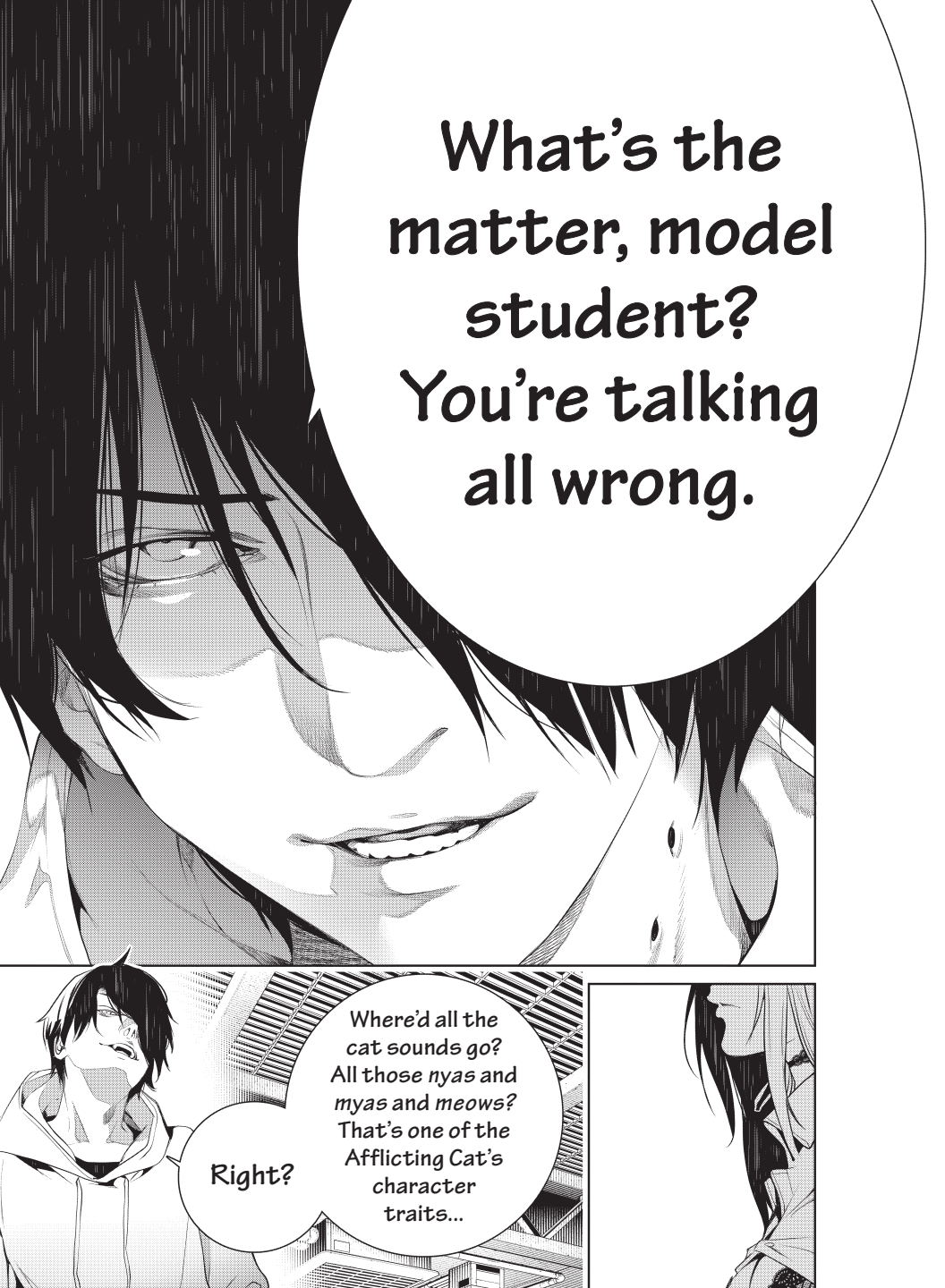
That's who...
...she's always been!
I'll do this my way.
I'll do something that only I can pull off—
in a way that's uniquely my own.

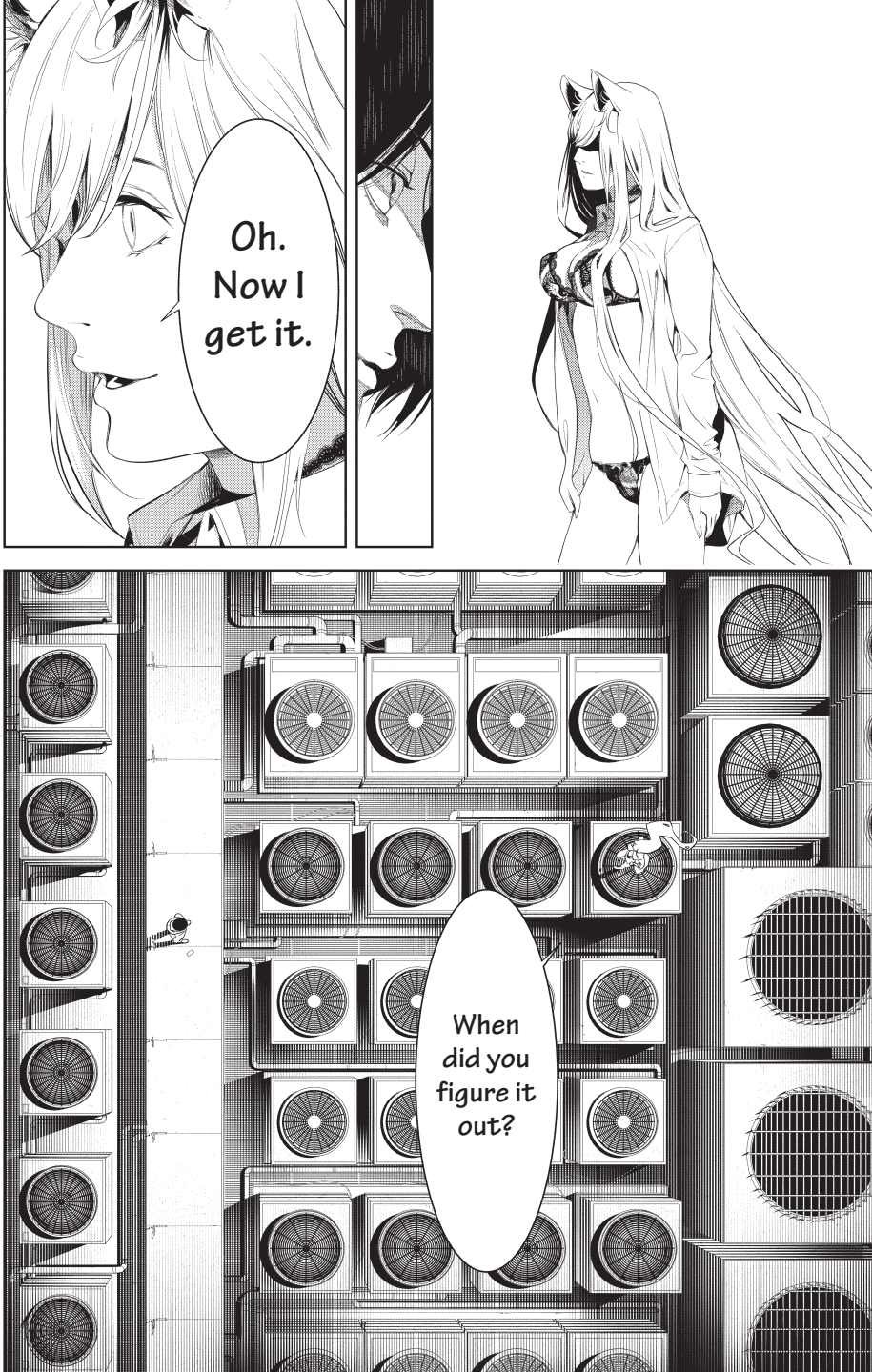
If Hanekawa was going to reject me.
If she wasn't going to seek my help.
Then I'd just have to seek hers.

ARE YOU OKAY, ARARAGI ?!
As luck would have it...
Hey.
...I'm a man with a cornucopia of causes for concern.
A fount of fret.
Hanekawa
A vampire is going to kill me.
You need to help me.

Heh.
A vampire is going to kill me.
You need to help me.
This one text—
would be enough for Hanekawa.
...You're the worst, Araragi. You lied and got me worried. You know you shouldn't do that.
Of course...
Oh...
...

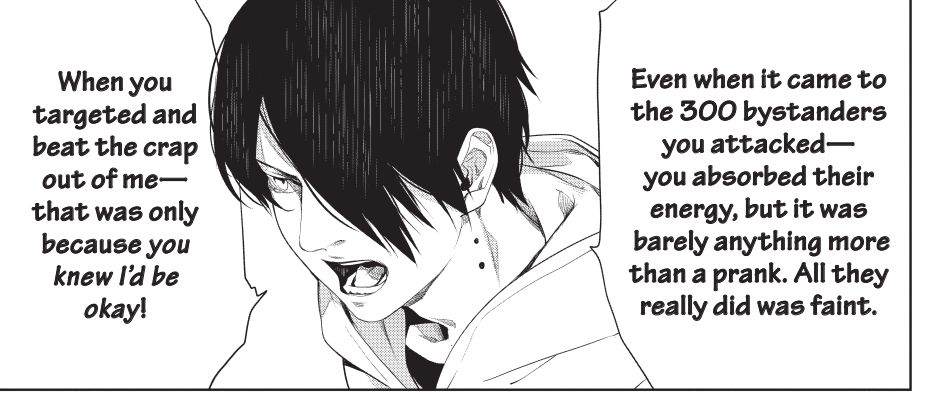
Kaahk!
Ka khak!
...
What is it?
Kahka-kakak!
Kahka-kakak!
I'm upset with you right now...
What's so funny about that?

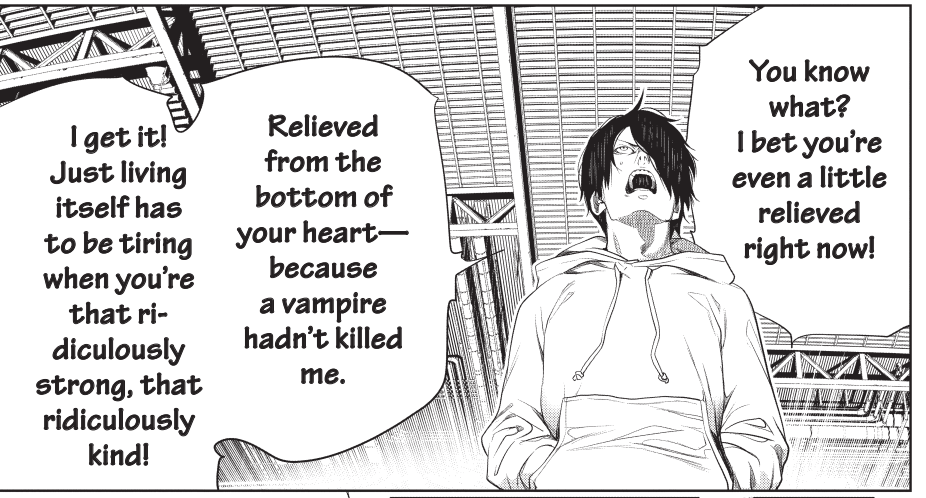

What's the matter, model student? You're talking all wrong.
Where'd all the cat sounds go? All those *nyas* and *myas* and *meows*? That's one of the Afflicting Cat's character traits...
Right?

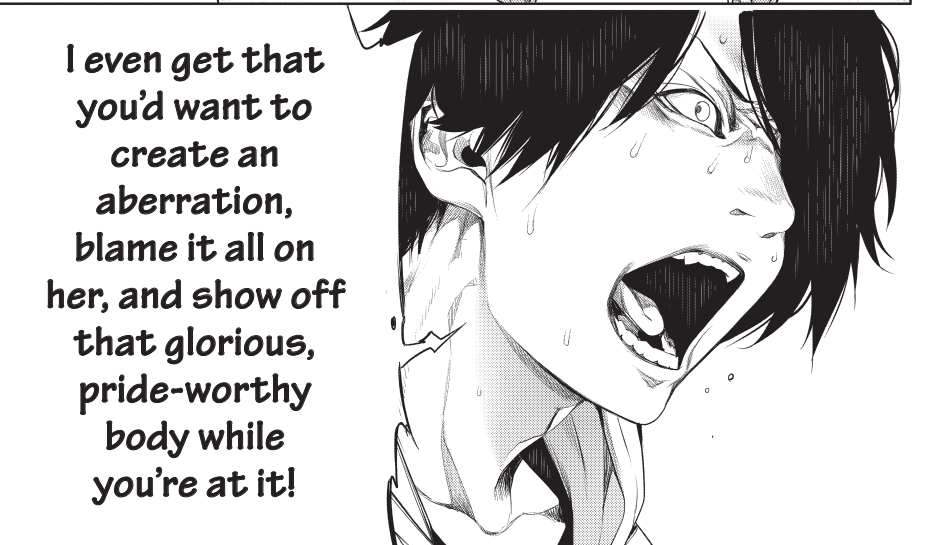

Oh.
Now I
get it.
When
did you
figure it
out?

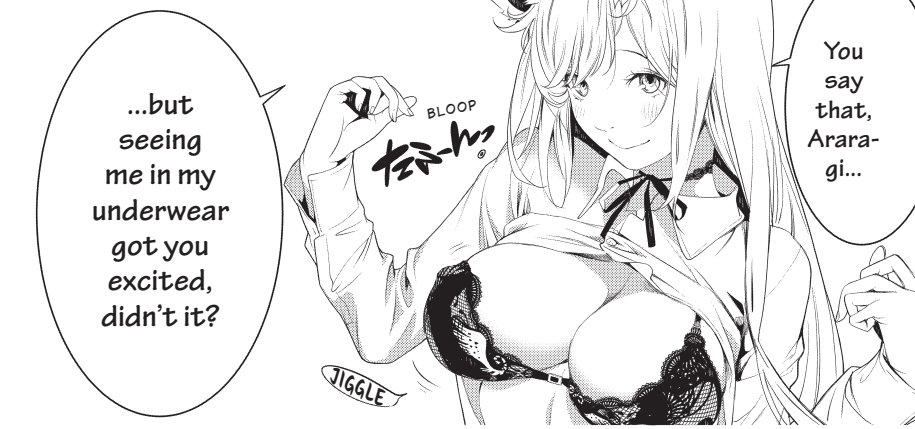
I kind of had an idea... from the beginning.
Well.
Either way is fine, I guess. Haha!
No, I guess it'd be "Nyow I get it?"
That's right.
I'm your friend, you know.
Nowhere, Hanekawa... *except for inside yourself.*
It's just like Oshino said... *There was never an aberration to be found in the first place.*
There was never—anything about her that was out of character.

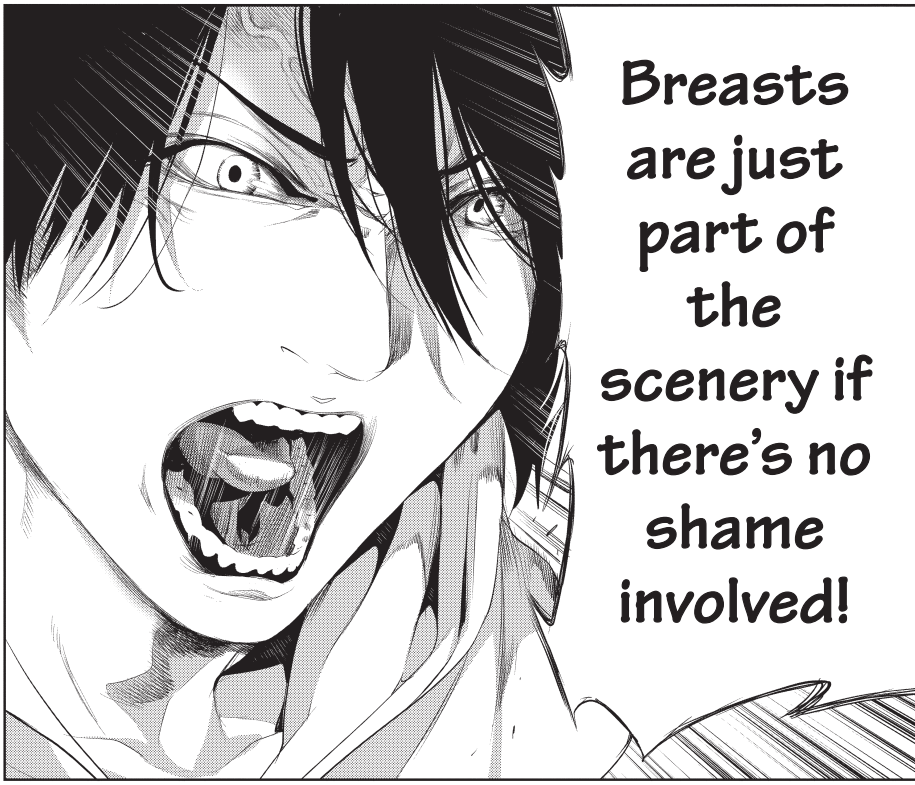
No exaggerations, nothing added on top—just your honest, genuine self.
In other words, this is you.
A calico when I looked closely.
Sure enough, it was just a regular cat.
The grave of the cat that got run over... I dug it back up.
If a friend sends you a message asking for help, it doesn't matter what you're facing.
It's like an instinct for you—like a cat playing with a ball of yarn. You have to rush over.
That's how hopelessly kind you are.
That's who you are.
D
E
F
G


When you targeted and beat the crap out of me—that was only because you knew I'd be okay!
Even when it came to the 300 bystanders you attacked—you absorbed their energy, but it was barely anything more than a prank. All they really did was faint.


I get it! Just living itself has to be tiring when you're that ridiculously strong, that ridiculously kind!
Relieved from the bottom of your heart—because a vampire hadn't killed me.
You know what? I bet you're even a little relieved right now!


I even get that you'd want to create an aberration, blame it all on her, and show off that glorious, pride-worthy body while you're at it!


You say that, Arara-gi...
BLOOP
JIGGLE
...but seeing me in my underwear got you excited, didn't it?


Breasts are just part of the scenery if there's no shame involved!

Really?
What ?!

語 *gatari*

物 *mono*

TSUBASAcat

17

化 *bake*

化 *bake*

物 *mono*

TSUBASAcat

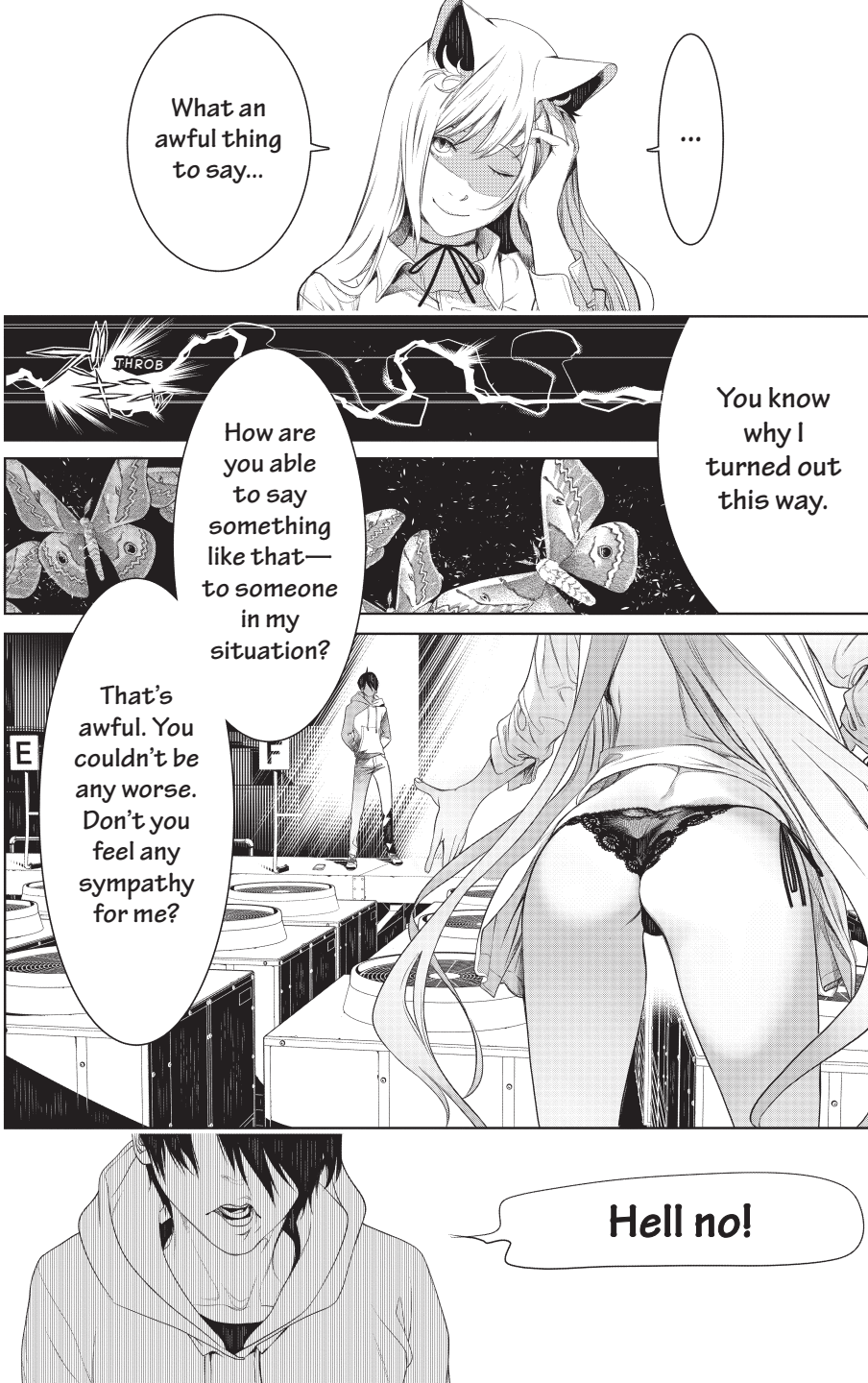
17

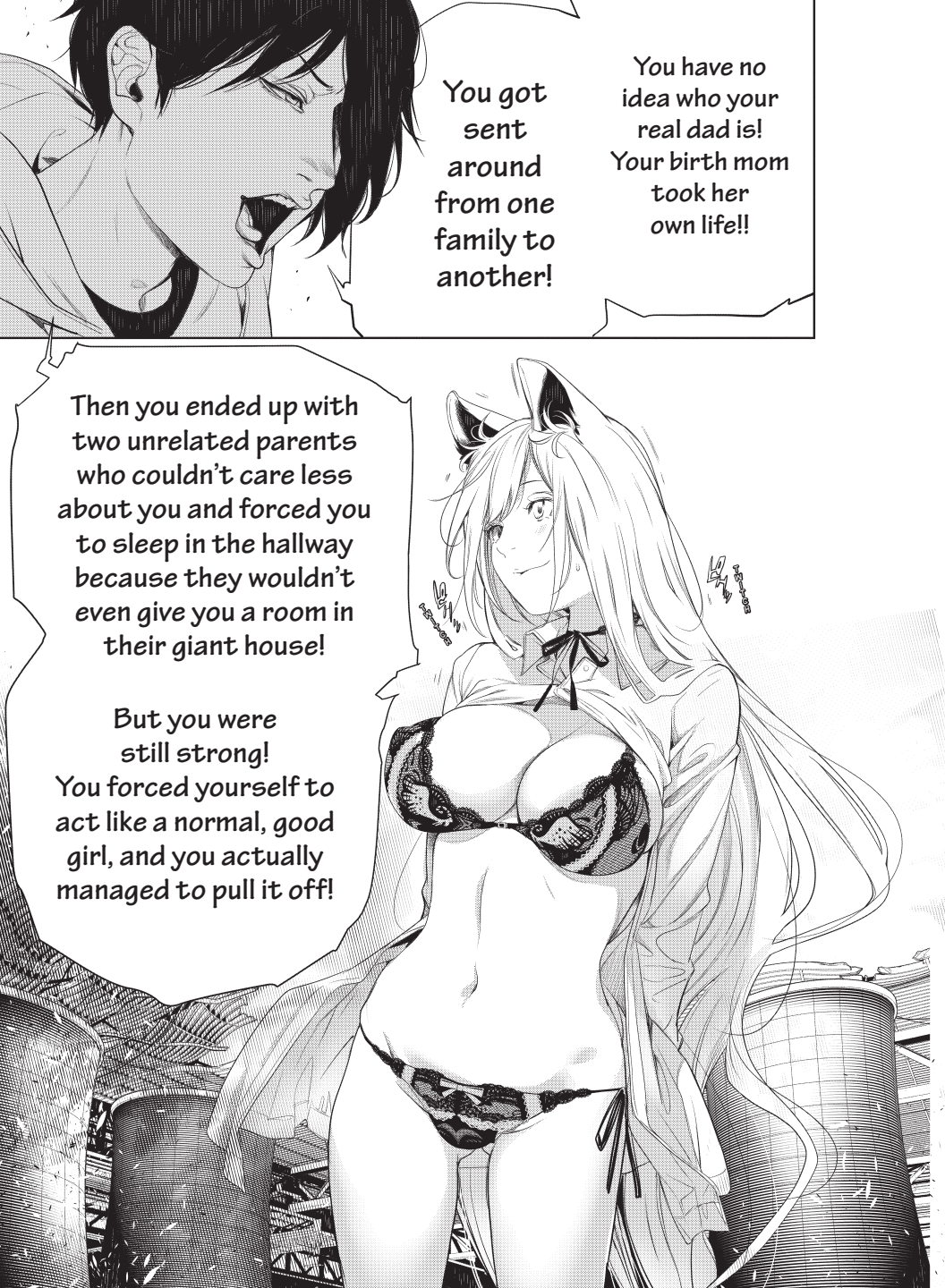
語 *gatari*

And that
—is also me?
This is...
...me.
What are you... saying?
Arara...
TIP
...
Stop being unreasonable.

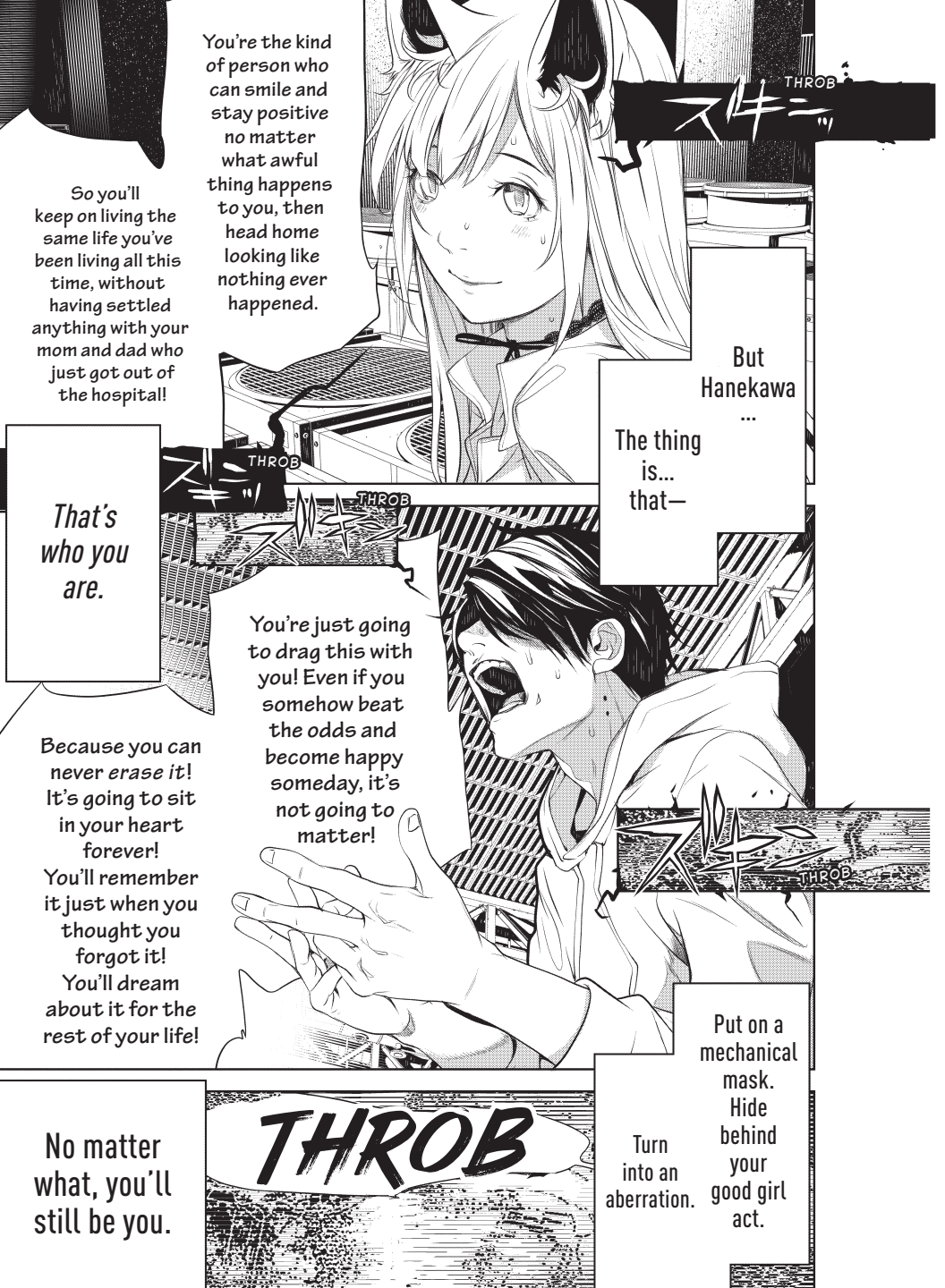
I struggle, too.
Even I have things I can and can't do.
There are lots of things I want to do but can't—
Even I'm human, you know?

You know you're not human!
DON'T YOU DARE CALL YOUR-SELF A HUMAN RIGHT NOW.
You entrusted your body to an aberration.
Do human heads grow ears like that?
Hm?


What an awful thing to say...
...
THROB
You know why I turned out this way.
How are you able to say something like that—to someone in my situation?
That's awful. You couldn't be any worse. Don't you feel any sympathy for me?
E
F
Hell no!


You have no idea who your real dad is! Your birth mom took her own life!!
You got sent around from one family to another!
Then you ended up with two unrelated parents who couldn't care less about you and forced you to sleep in the hallway because they wouldn't even give you a room in their giant house!
But you were still strong! You forced yourself to act like a normal, good girl, and you actually managed to pull it off!

I know I shouldn't say this, but what an unfor-tunate life!
Talk about unlucky!
But you know what?
Is that really so bad?
Isn't that just fine?
THROB
THROB
THROB

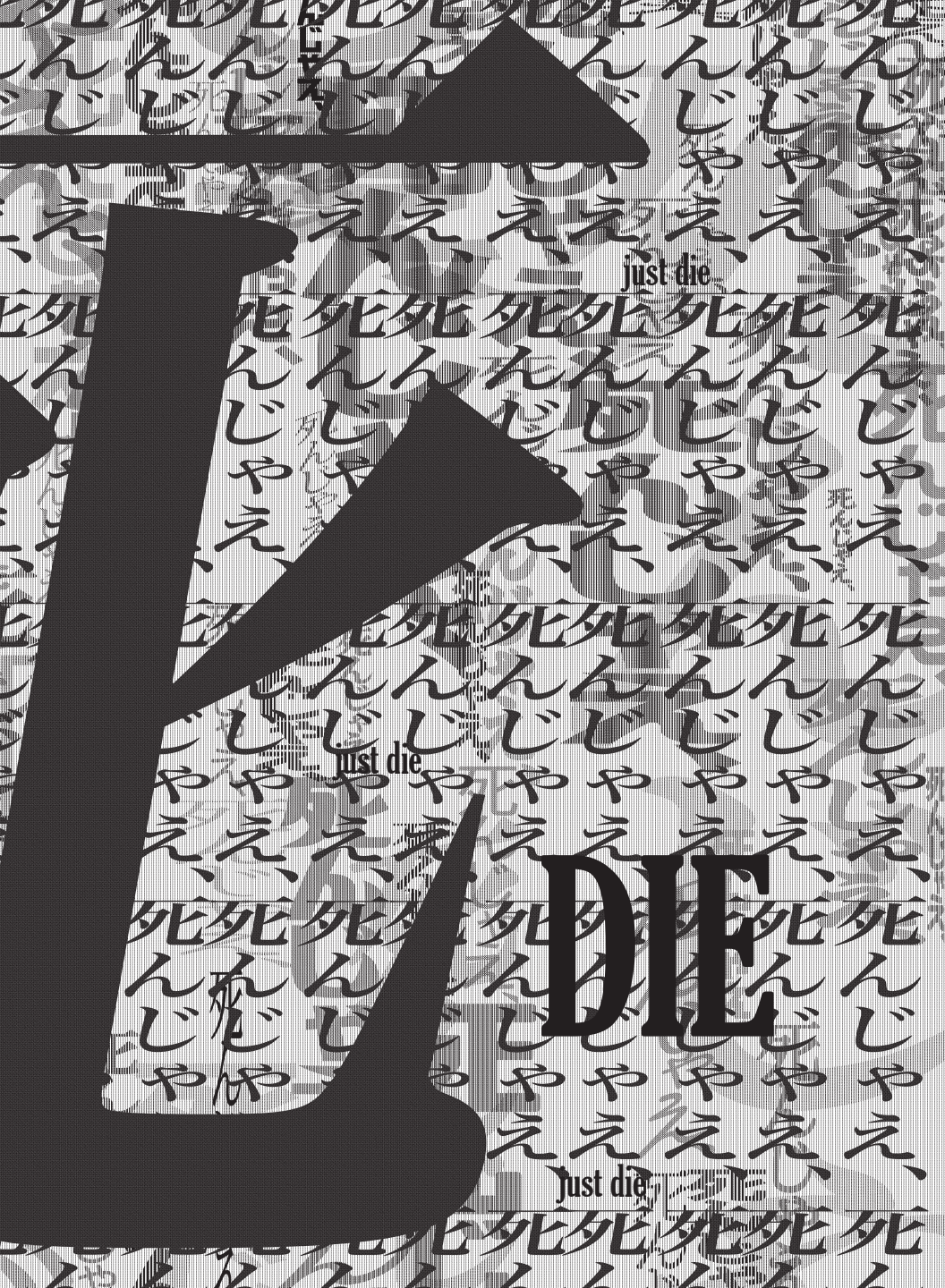

You're the kind of person who can smile and stay positive no matter what awful thing happens to you, then head home looking like nothing ever happened.
So you'll keep on living the same life you've been living all this time, without having settled anything with your mom and dad who just got out of the hospital!
THROB
スキニ"
But Hanekawa ...
The thing is... that—
THROB
スキ"
THROB
That's who you are.
You're just going to drag this with you! Even if you somehow beat the odds and become happy someday, it's not going to matter!
Because you can never erase it! It's going to sit in your heart forever! You'll remember it just when you thought you forgot it! You'll dream about it for the rest of your life!
スキ
THROB
No matter what, you'll still be you.
THROB
Turn into an aberration.
Put on a mechanical mask. Hide behind your good girl act.

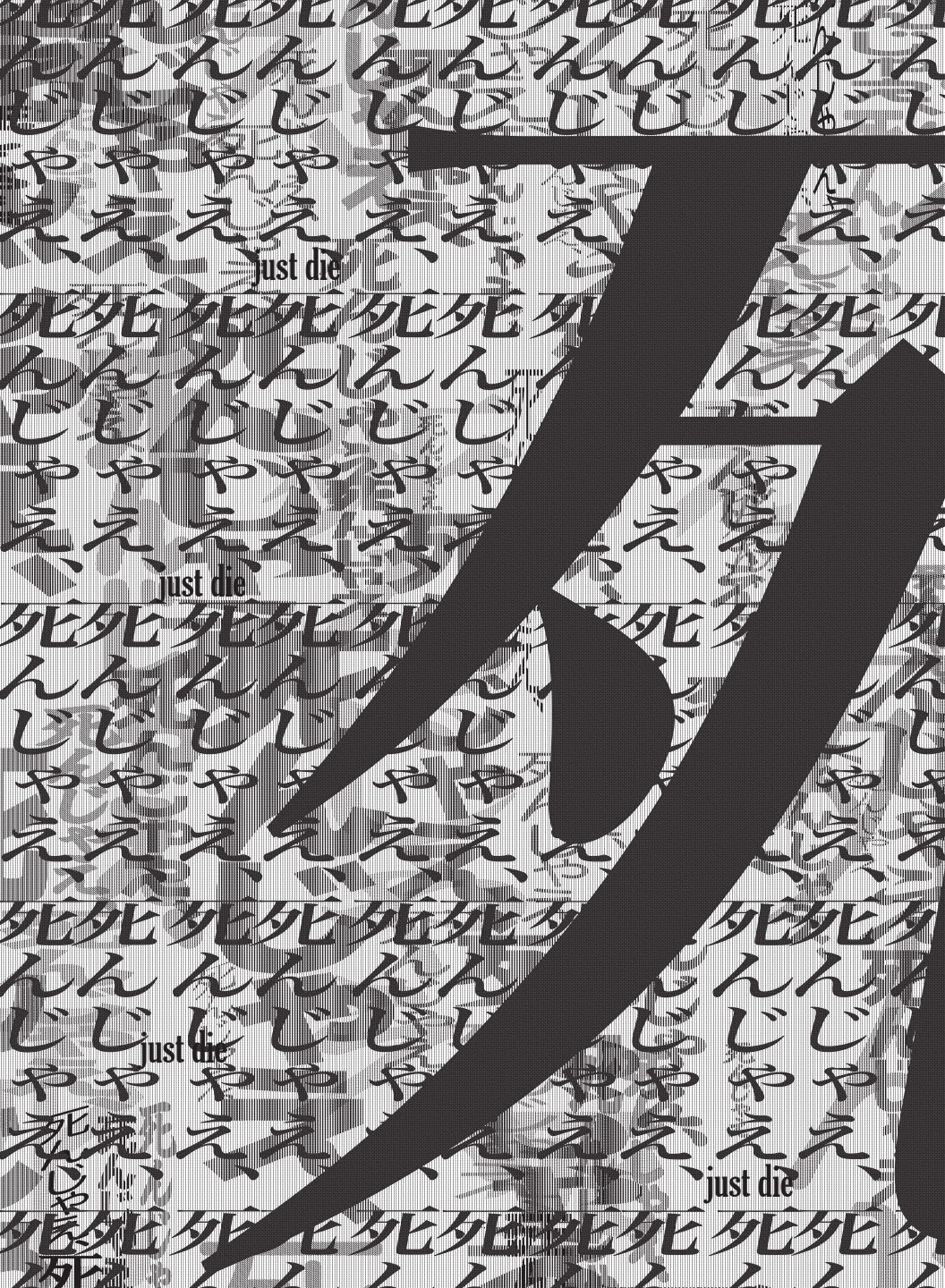
Hane-kawa.
That's— who we are.
OFFICIAL25YD
Shoulder it.
So don't pretend to ignore it.
There's no changing that now.

GWASH—!!
...
THKKT
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
MROW ?!
TWITCH
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL
But if you still want to relieve your stress, then—I'll take it all on.

VZZZZSH
SQUEEZ
SWOOO
SQUEEZ
SQUEEZ
TWIDDLE
TWID
TWID
I'd be happy to feel up your breasts whenever you want.
I'll lick any part of your body while you're in your underwear...
No.
I'll lick you, but only with my eyes.
I hope you can content yourself with that.
I don't know if the way you corrected yourself is any better!

How could I ask you...
...to accept someone like me?
You really are the worst, Araragi.
The only thing I can become is a vampire.
So you're not going to become my hero—Araragi?
Oh.
How could I expect you—to accept someone like me?
What was I thinking?


just die
just die
just die
DIE


just die
just die
just die
just die

Mya-ha! You're going to take on all of my stress nyow, Araragi?
How wonderful.
BA-KRAK
Go ahead.
It'd be like a dream come true.
That's ...
...why I came here, after all.
So you don't mind if I mewder you?
just die
死んじゃえ

I want ...
...to die by your hand—
Just die

BOOM

HAHA
HAHA
MWAHAHA

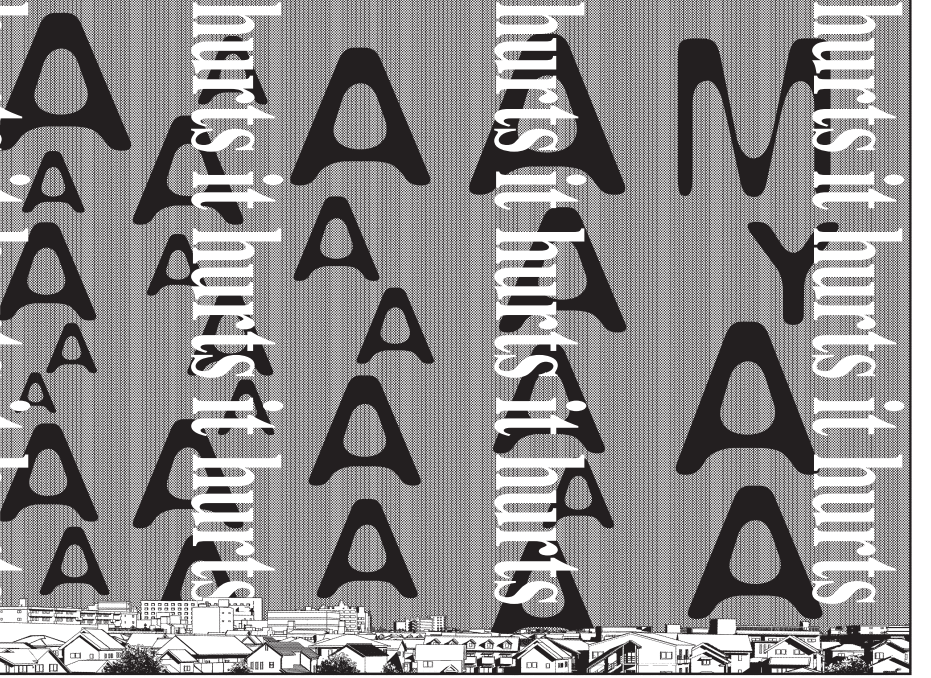
Ara-ragi.
You know...
KLIK
KLINK
SKREEE
You really—don't know anything.
Like how much...
How very much I expected from you.
Heh.
Want me to head home with you?
No.
It's fine.
Mya-haha!
Ha!
Ha...
...

あーん
WAAH
Death
I thought you'd have what it takes to stop me.
Death
Heh.
...why wasn't I able to be honest and just say yes?
I did. And yet—
that day ...
That day—why couldn't you...
...come back for me?
...Heh.

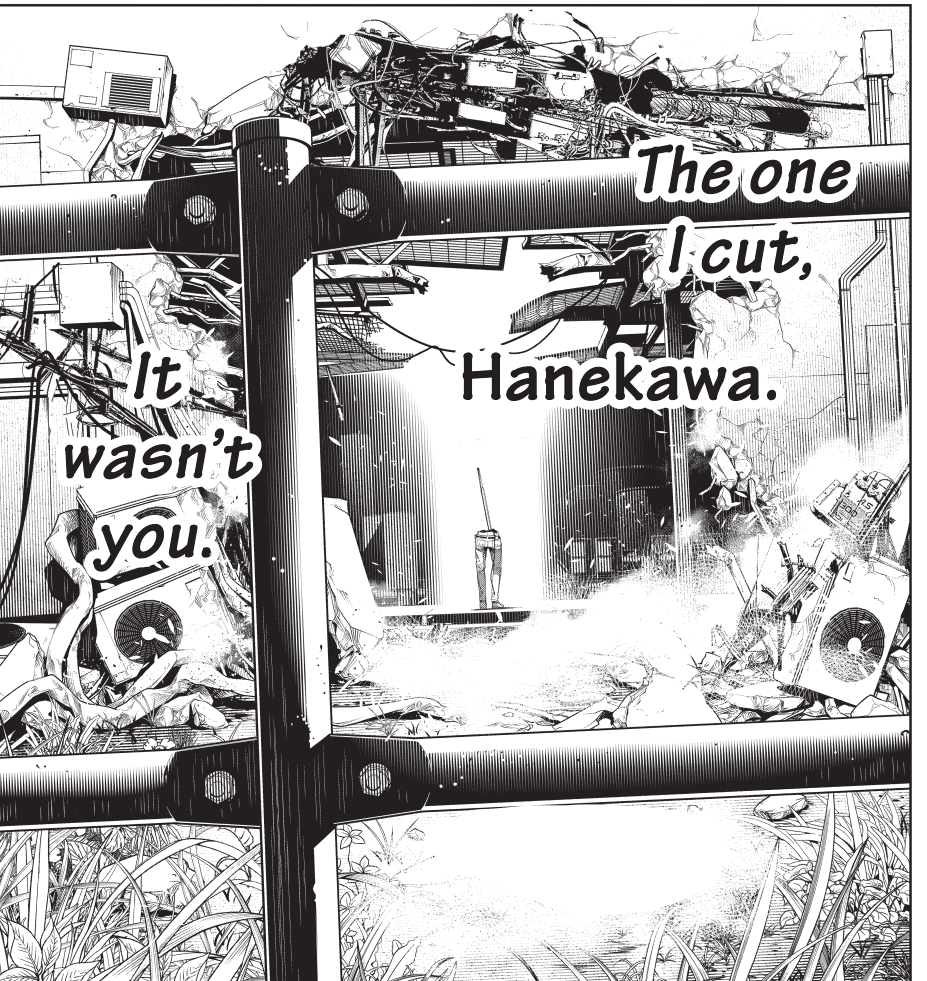
Just die.
I should just die.

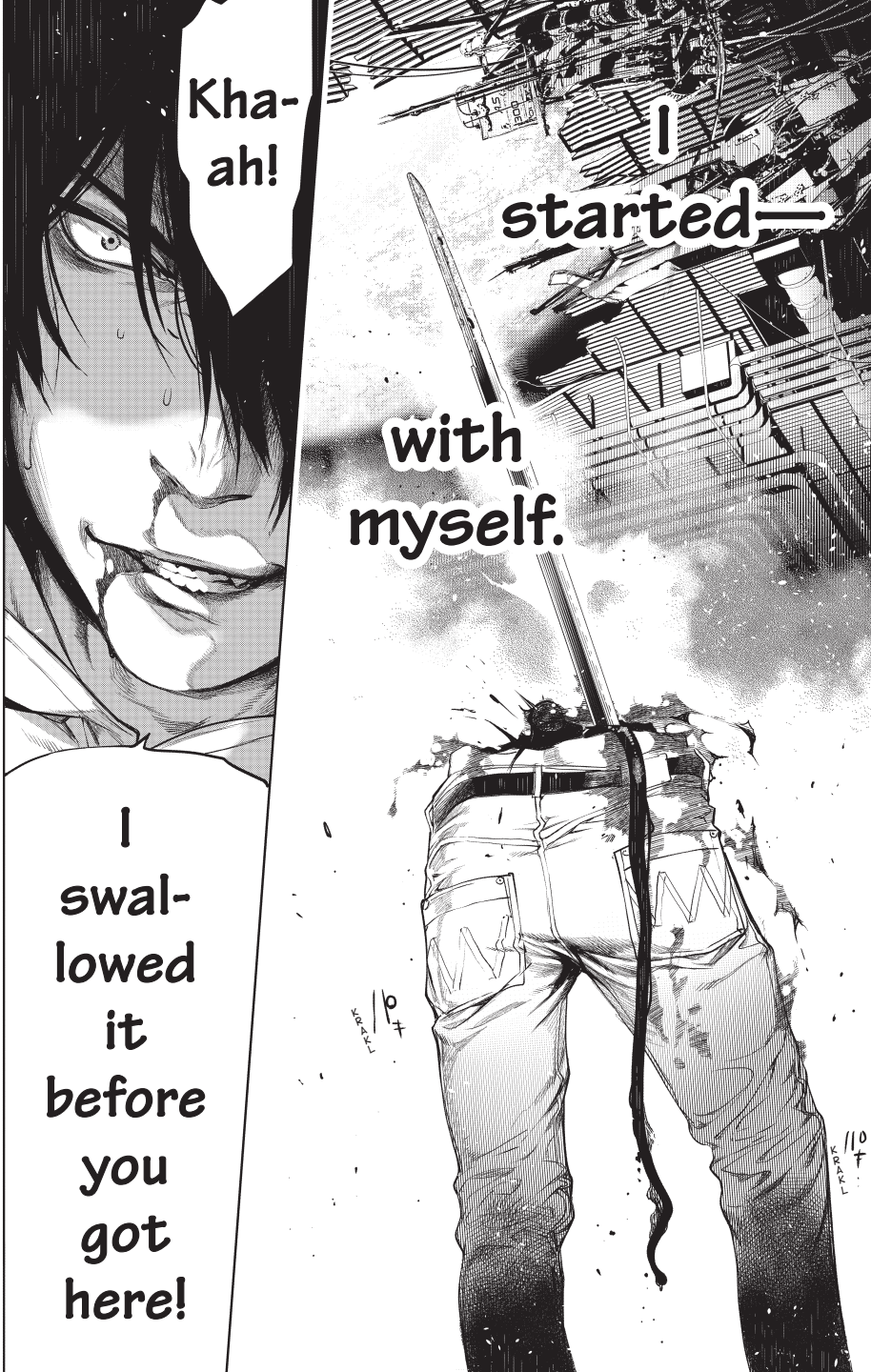
After ...
...a slight delay...
...an almost comical amount of pain ran through my body.
Ah—
Ow!

...
...!
Ow...
TWITCH
TWITCH
Ah!
Ah!
Enngh!
Ah.
CHATTER
Eergh!
CHATTER

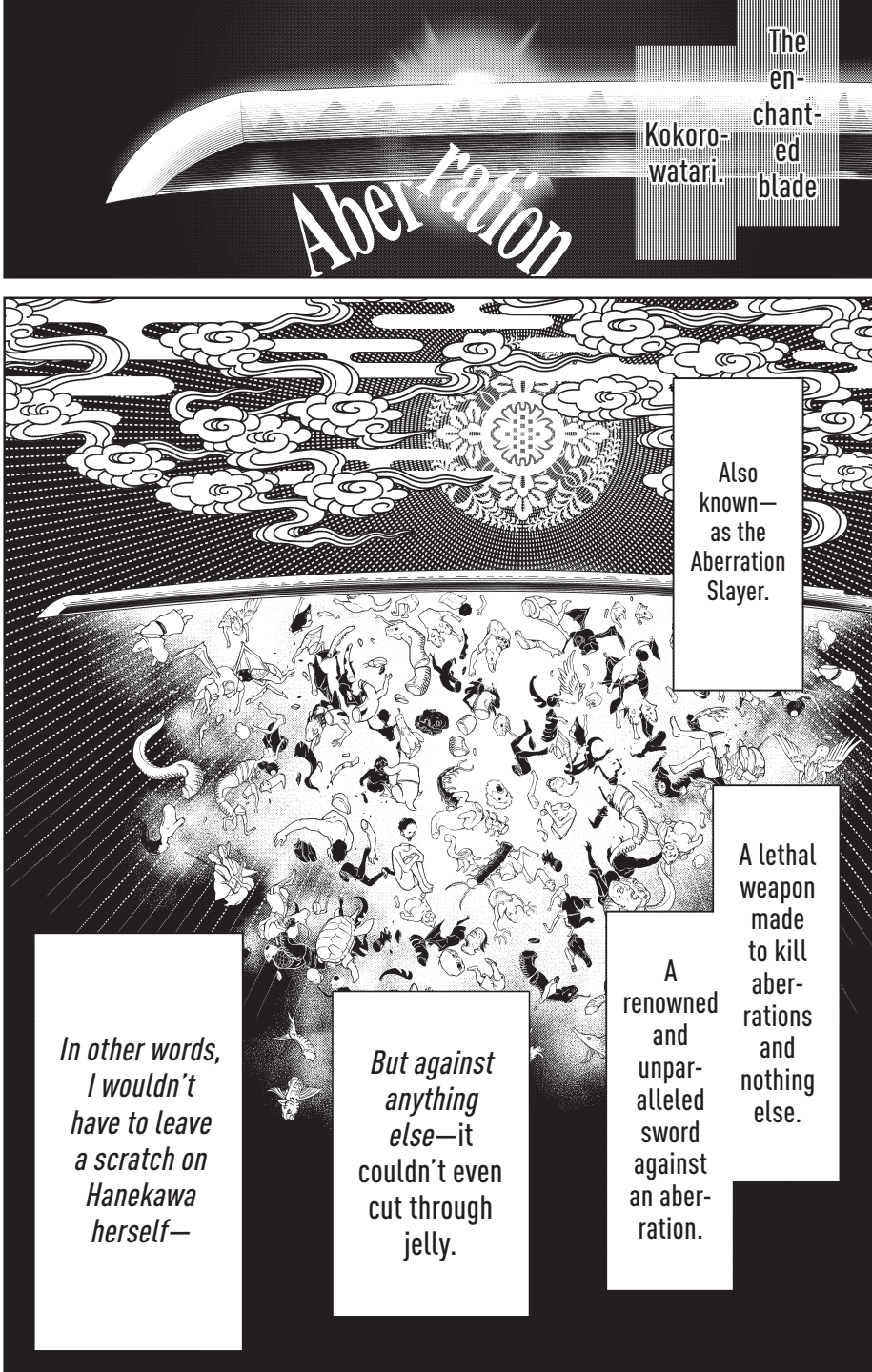

AAAA

I...I'm not wounded...!
There isn't... a single scratch on me—
Ah... Araragi! What did you do? To my body? To me?!
Haha- ha...
That's not like you, Hanekawa... Keheheh...
You must know I'd never so much as leave a scratch on that divine body of yours.


The one I cut, Hanekawa.
It wasn't you.

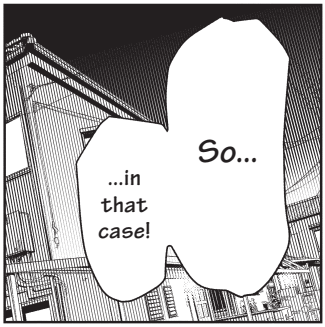

Kha-
ah!
I swal-
lowed
it
before
you
got
here!
I
started—
with
myself.

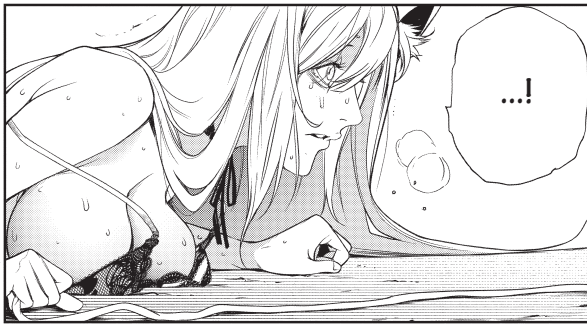
Though for a gentleman such as myself, provoking you with such terrible lies like saying I'd grope your breasts or that you should let me lick your butt was much more hellish than having a blade down the center of my body, of course—
Serves you right!
This is what happens when you befriend someone like me, Hanekawa!
You're the one who shouldn't have touched me!
Stay away, don't you touch the Afflicting Cat—isn't that what they say?
Well, Hanekawa—no...!
Cat!

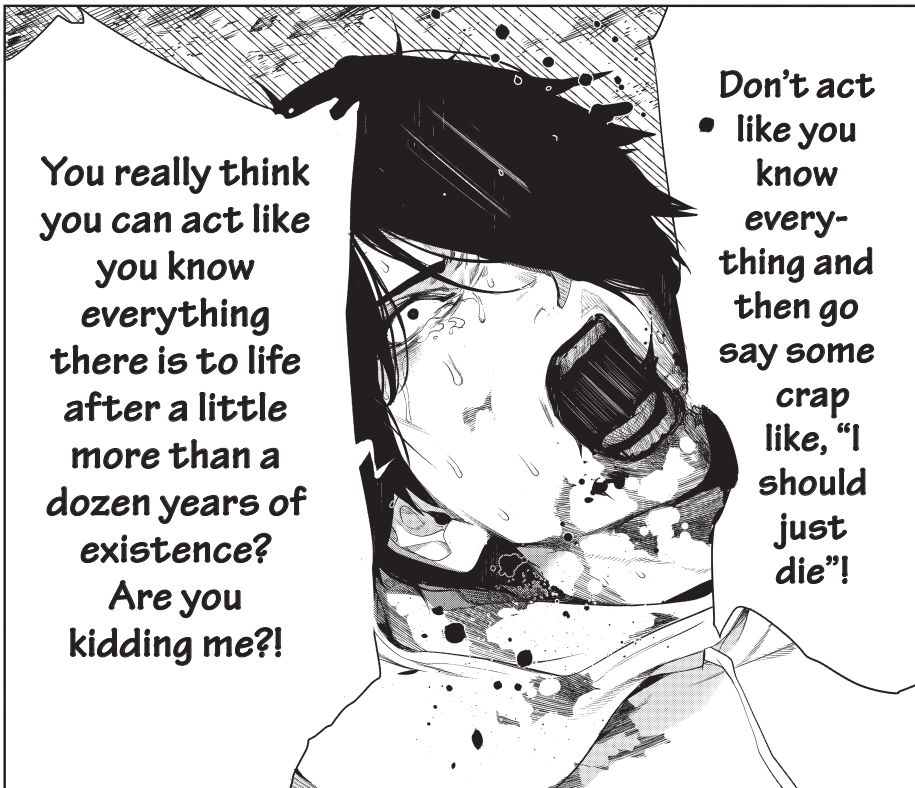

Aberration
Kokoro-watari.
The en-chant-ed blade
Also known— as the Aberration Slayer.
A lethal weapon made to kill aber-rations and nothing else.
A renowned and unpar-alleled sword against an aber-ration.
But against anything else—it couldn't even cut through jelly.
In other words, I wouldn't have to leave a scratch on Hanekawa herself—

That's like a cheat code ...
...the cat?!
You only cut...
I never told you about it!
You didn't know about it, did you?!

Don't worry, Hanekawa.
Not even you know everything.


So...
...in that case!


...!

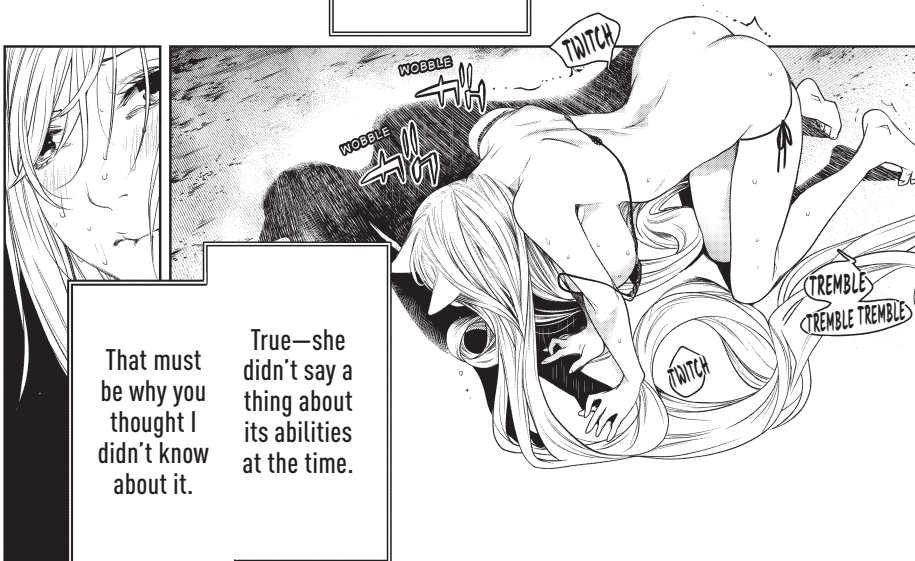

You really think you can act like you know everything there is to life after a little more than a dozen years of existence? Are you kidding me?!
Don't act like you know every-thing and then go say some crap like, "I should just die"!

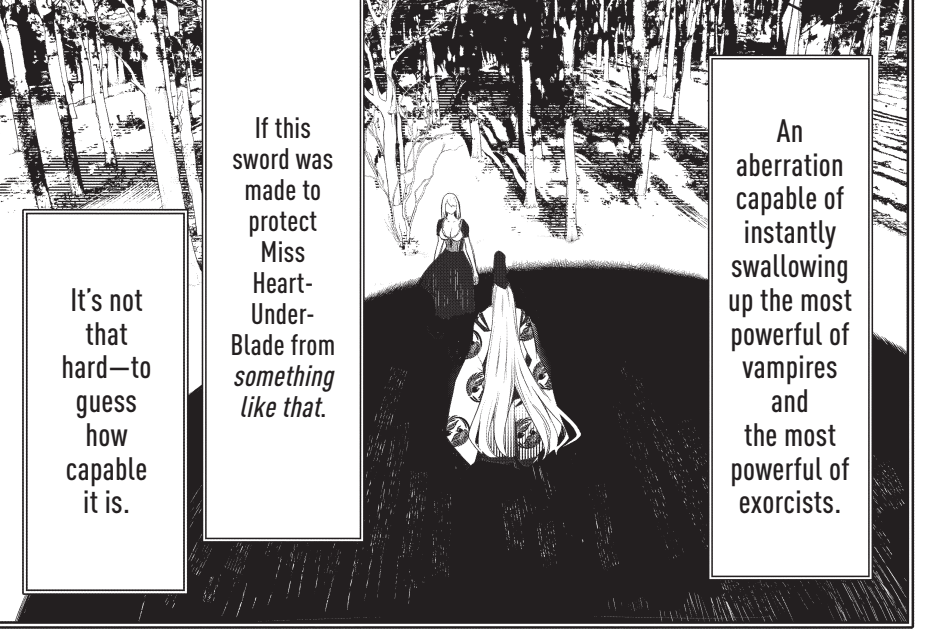
WHEEZ
WHEEZ
I can hardly believe it.
How fortunate can a guy be?
I'm going to die.
Yeergh!
Yeerbh!
Brrrgh!
And, in fact, there are no signs of anything below my torso growing back.
This cat's attack stole my energy and vampiric healing abilities.
I'm going to die. For Hanekawa. I—get to die for her.
Well, yes.
Now, for number two...
I understand—of course I do.
None of this... means a thing.
I think I know what Oshino wanted to tell me then. "*You—*
will only be dying in vain."
...

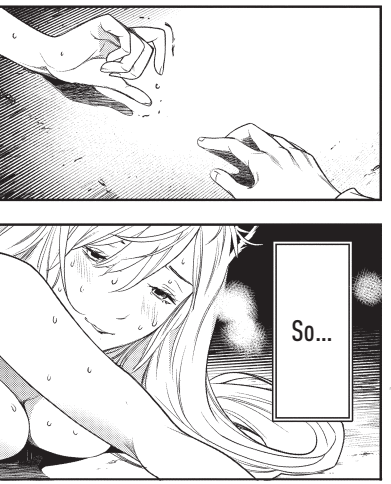
Resetting Hanekawa's aberration won't do a thing to solve her problems.
I bet... there are a lot of people in situations like yours.
But none of them... blame it all on an aberration. They don't rely on an aberration—and they still live their lives.
That's what I think.
Which is why—Hanekawa, that's the reason why...
It's why I don't have any intention...
...of going out and saving you.
KRAKL
KRAKL
KRAKL
I just made a decision back then.
That I'd die for your sake.
Stop acting...so spoiled, you dummy.
So...forget about me and all these horrible things I'm saying.
You—just do your best.
HSSHT
HSSHT
WHEEZ

You can do this on your own— find happiness.
You can do this. You can do this.
Haa.
Haah.
Haah.
Heh.
...
The best friend...
...a person could have.
...my hero.
You really are...
Ha!
Ha!
Ha!
Ha!
You know, Araragi.

Miss Heart-Under-Blade told us about it.







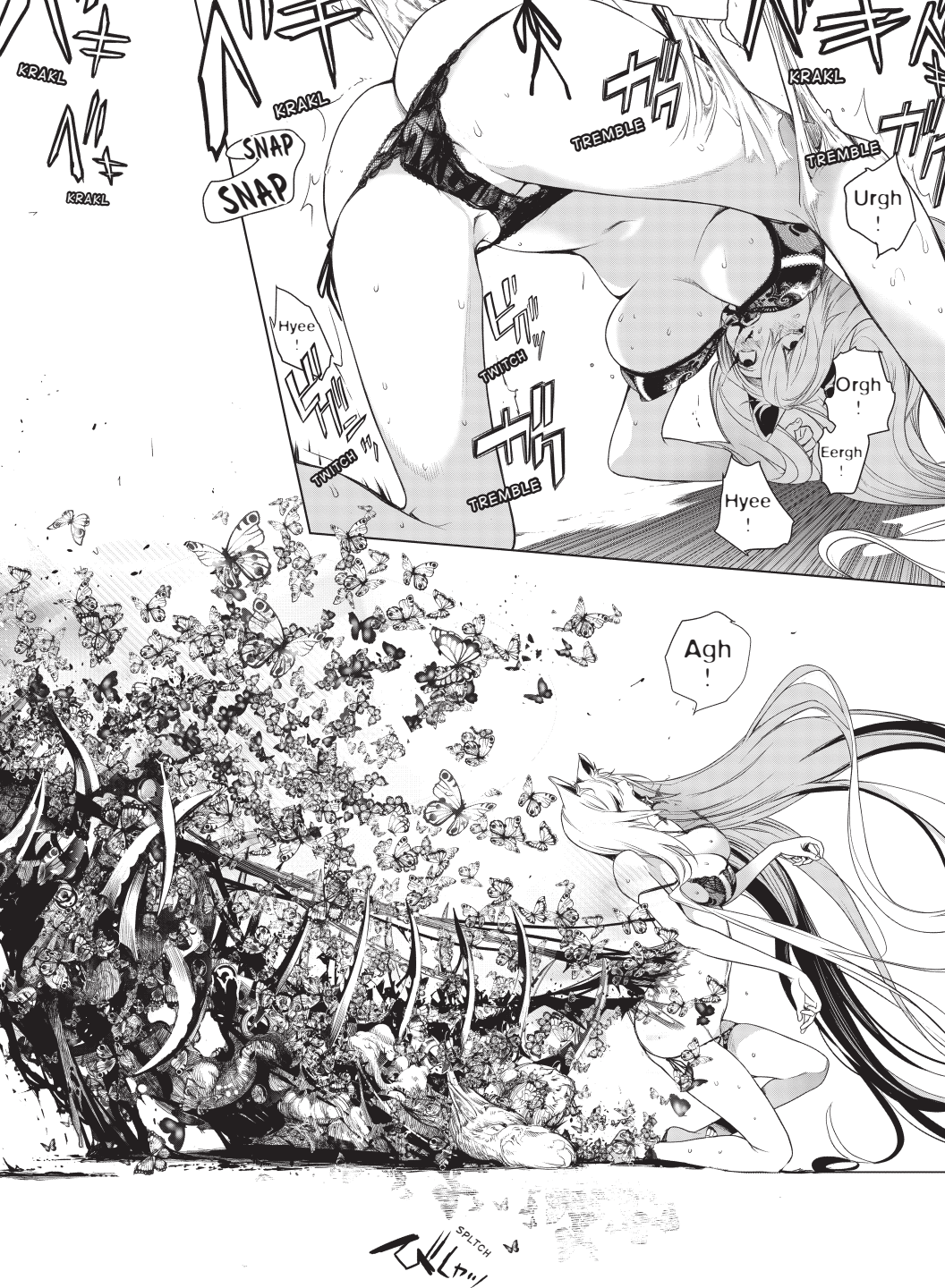
So...

...thank you, Araragi.

For killing me.

No...
You cut my aberration—the one I birthed—and so I'm going to die.
I've completely merged with this aberration now.
Because I've already realized it. It's too late for me.
Heh heh.
I'm so glad, Araragi.
That—
I got to meet you.

I may have been born into sorrow...
...but now I can die...
... with such joy.
...
Hane... kawa?
Hanekawa ??!!
ドロ…
DRIBBLE
Huh ...?
BA-KRAK
ZSHH

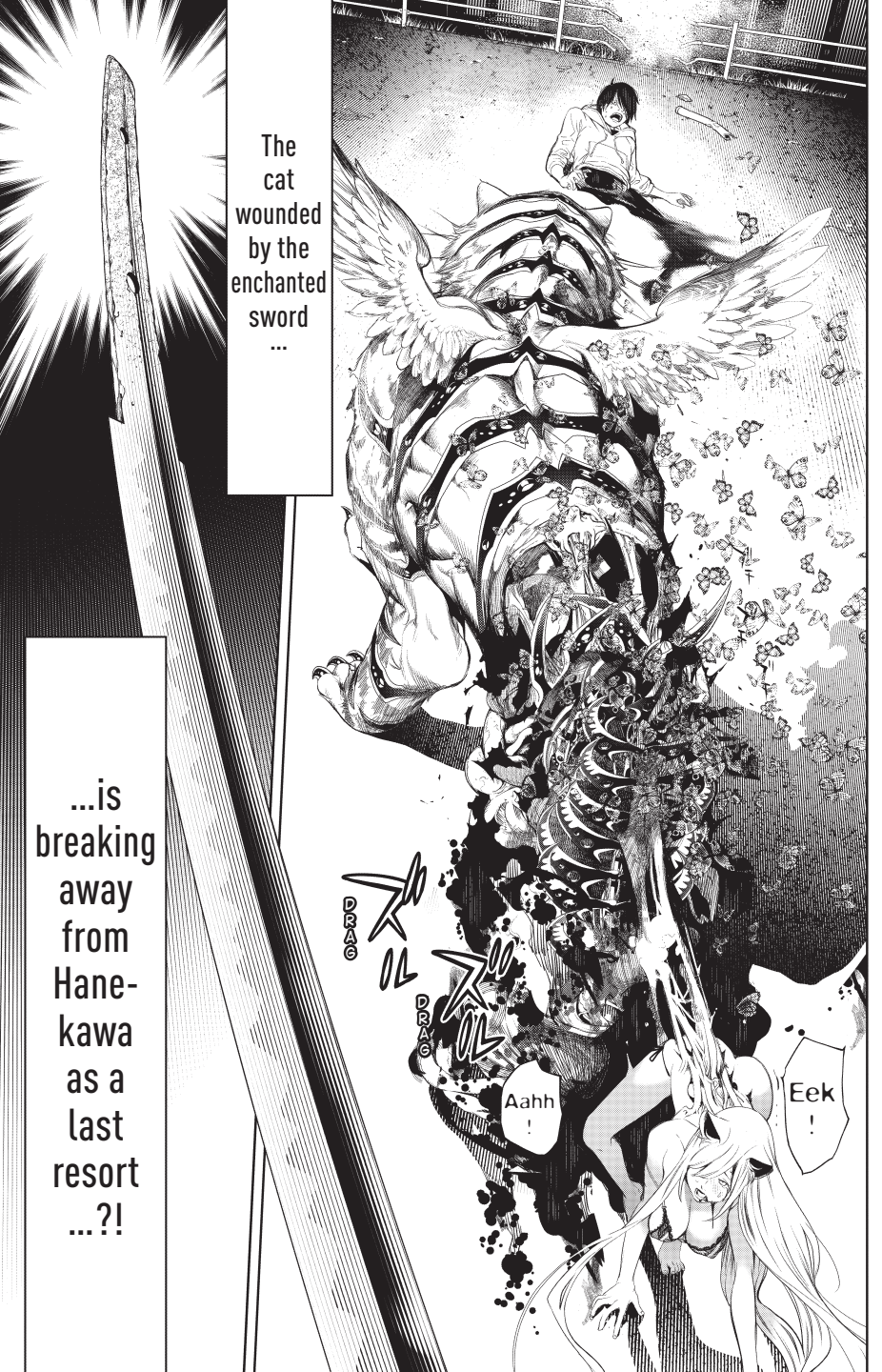

KRAKL
KRAKL
KRAKL
KRAKL
SNAP
SNAP
Hyee
!
TWITCH
TWITCH
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
Urgh
!
Orgh
!
Eergh
!
Hyee
!
Agh
!
SPLTCH

KRAKL

GROOOAR
Wha?

BAKEMONOGATARI

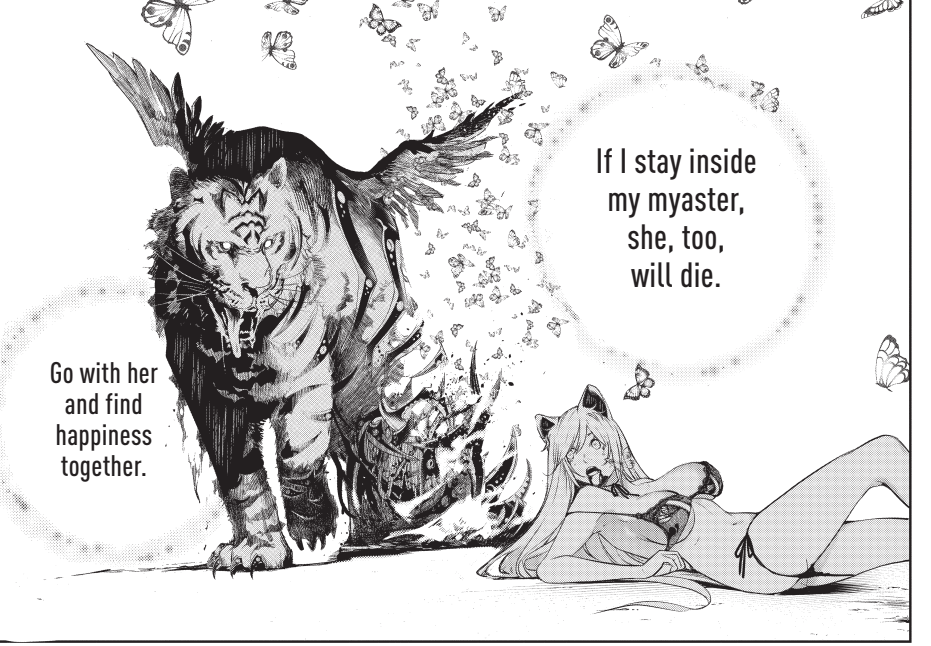
However rotted, weakened, or close to death...
...an aberration— is still an aberration.
KRAAK!
KRAAK!
KRAAK!
Ah!
Agh !
MEOO-OOO-OOW!

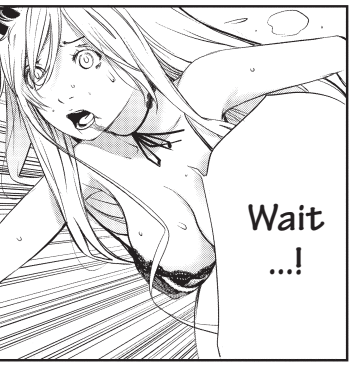

The cat wounded by the enchanted sword ...
...is breaking away from Hane-kawa as a last resort ...?!
DRAG
DRAG
Aahh !
Eek !

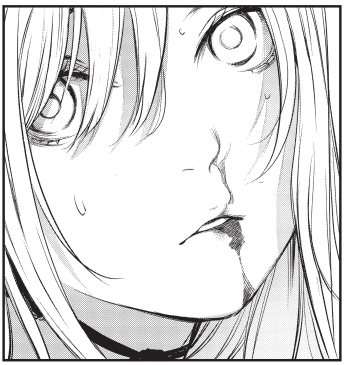
GRRNPH!
SNAP
GLANCE
GLANCE
Fft!
Fft!
Fft!
Ah!
ZHLRR
GRRKT
SNIFF
SNIFF
No!
Stop pulling ...
Nah... Ah, aahh!
Aagh!
Eek!
Agh—
...!

Cat?!
What do you think you're doing—
...what you told me?
Don't you remember ...
Dam-mit...!
I can't just...
...die in peace here.
Eergh!
Ghya-ahk!
Aa-ahh!
THWAP
THWAP
THWAP
ZHLR
ZHLR
Weren't you going— to save Hanekawa?
What Hanekawa wants...
Hane-kawa...
Why are you making her suffer like this?

...is to become
a normal girl.





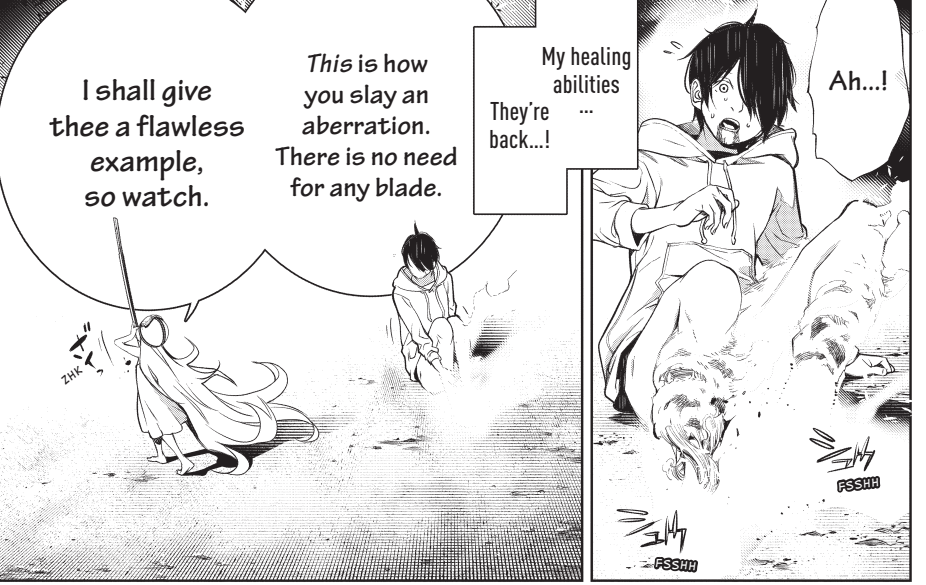


Using my blade in such a reckless manner.

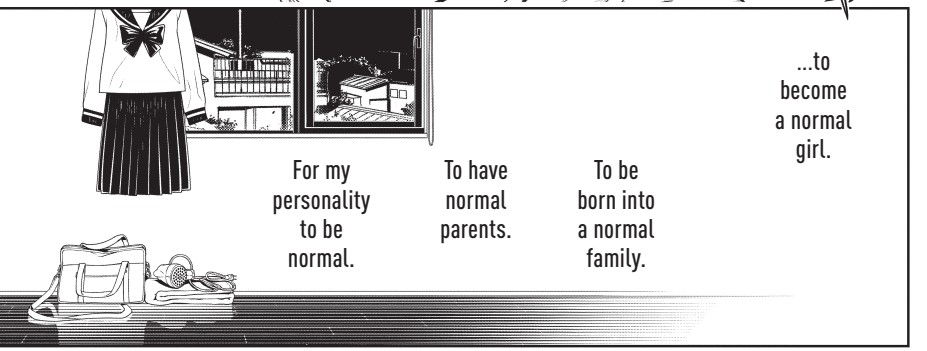
Art thou a dunce, servant?

THP

...
...Ngh!
チュピ
CHWIP
PA-KRAK
SPLAT
SHHKK
As ever and always...
...I see thine attention lieth only on what standeth before thee.


I shall give thee a flawless example, so watch.
This is how you slay an aberration. There is no need for any blade.
My healing abilities They're back...!
Ah...!
ZHK
FSSHH
FSSHH

Watch in fascination.
SPLURCH



To fall in love like normal.

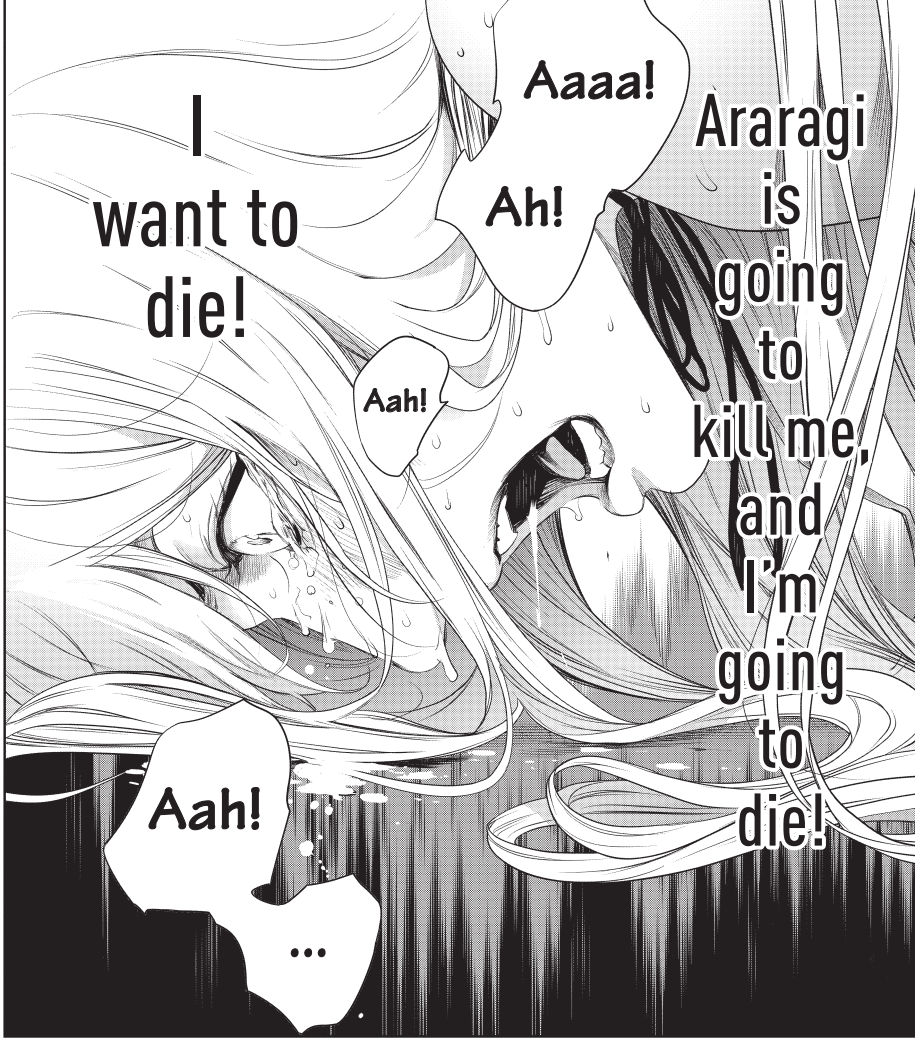
...of those born with inhuman power.

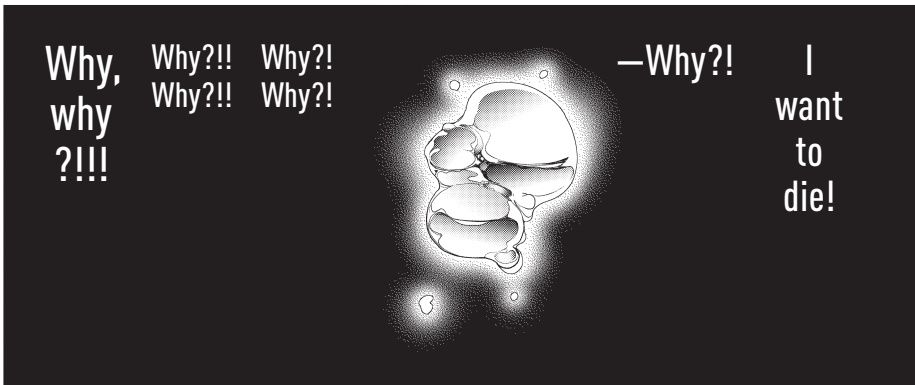
Such is the fate...

The greatest sorrow knowable as a human being—surely it willeth rule thy life.

Thou wilt find suffering and only suffering—thou mayest think that no suffering in this world could be greater, only to be met with sorrow that easily surpasses it.

Thou mayest think that Hell is a place already known to thee, but thou wouldst be terribly mistaken.
KRUNCH
KRUNCH
POP
POP
GRIND
POP
KRAK
KRAK
GRAKK
SPLAT
SPLAT
—I know.
I really do know.
There's no way I could be a normal girl. Not now.
Not when the normal goal for people is not to be normal.
Please, just stop it...
So this...
Aahh!
...is where I die.
Aahh!
Aahh!


Aaaa!
Ah!
I want to die!
Aah!
Araragi is going to kill me, and I'm going to die!
Aah!
...

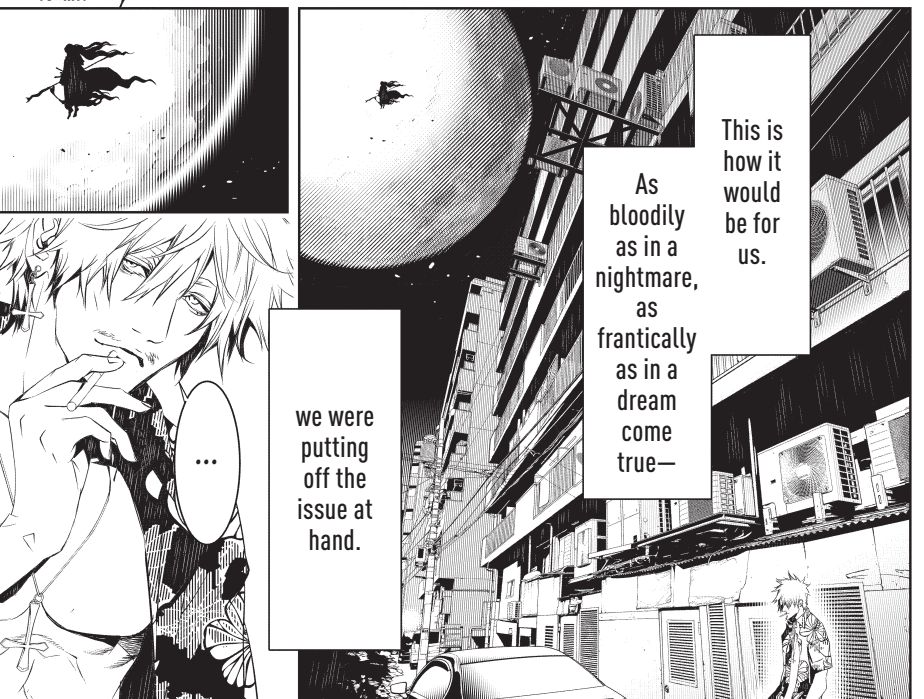

Why, why ?!!!
Why?!! Why?!
Why?!! Why?!
—Why?!
I want to die!

I have returned to this land after four hundred years— to find thee here.
One day, thou wilt change the very shape of this world.
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
I do not believe this to be a coincidence.
KRAKL
KRAKL
FSSHH

THIS IS FINE, HANE-KAWA!
THIS RIGHT HERE!
THIS IS FINE!
I know we're all screw-ups!
But we'll always be the same! We'll always be together!
The two of us will always, always, always be friends!

I know it's miserable for you and that you deserve better.
I know how you'll never be able to come back from it all and how there's no escape for you, either—
Hah!
...
So isn't this just fine?!

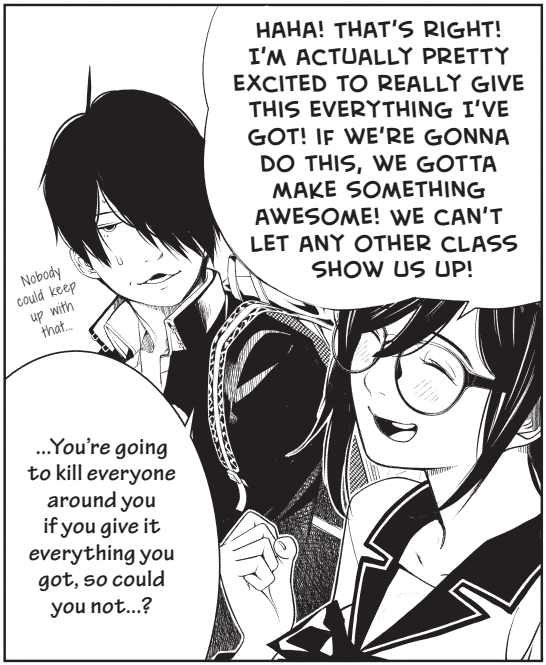
Then actually grope my breasts next time.
?!!
But whatever the case.
DAMN!
SO THERE'S STILL SOME OF THAT CAT IN YOU...?!


This is how it would be for us.
As bloodily as in a nightmare, as frantically as in a dream come true—
we were putting off the issue at hand.
...

Hmph.
I shall find this acceptable.
For now, at least.

BAKEMONOGATARI

Good morning, Araragi.
Good morning, Hane-kawa.



As for Hanekawa—she was the same as ever...

...thanks to Oshino erasing all of her memories relating to the cat.

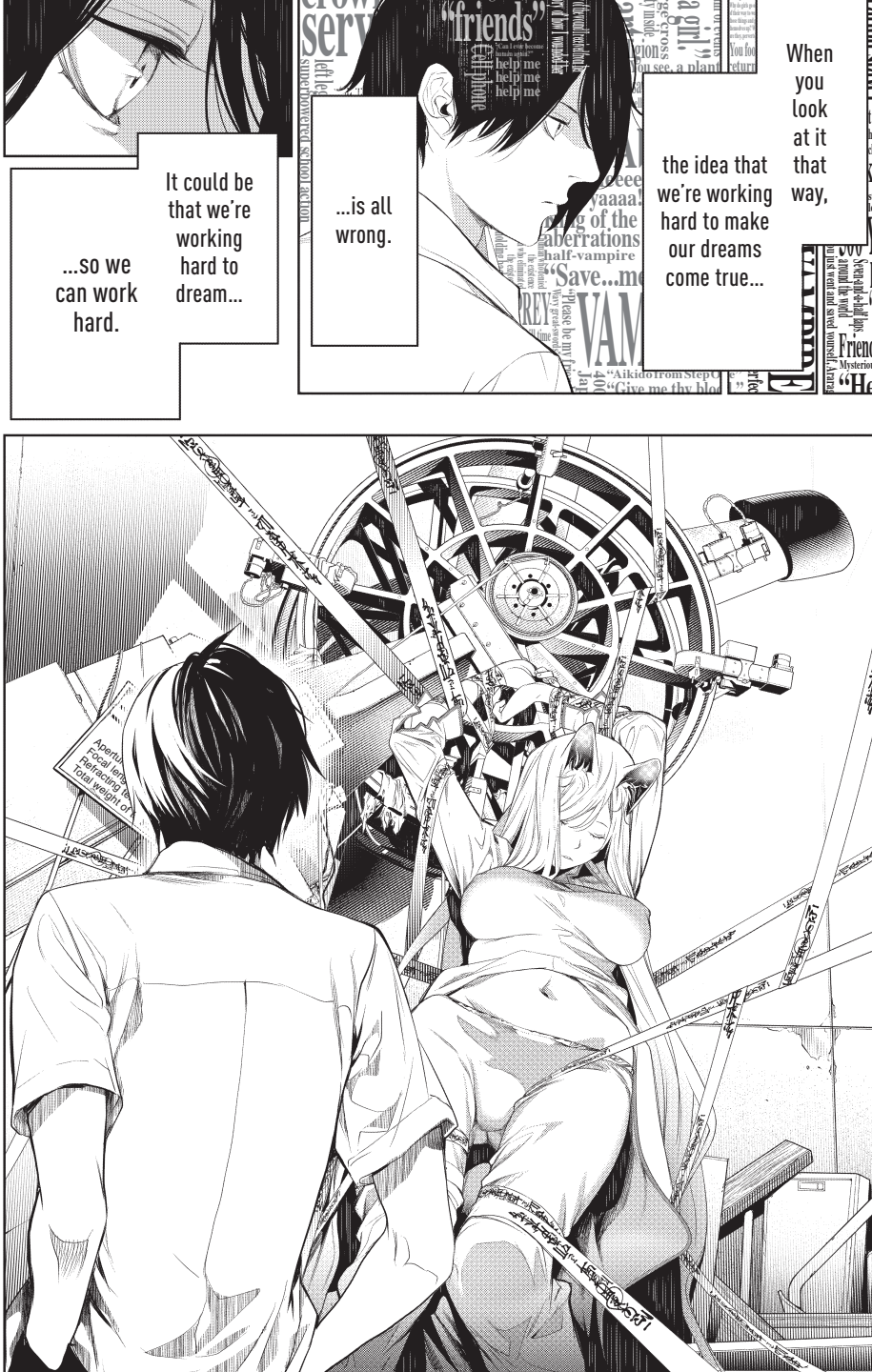
We'll need to start by getting you, my vice president, to really apply yourself to the project.
...Okay.
Still...
If I were to say she was exactly the same as she was before Golden Week—
I'd be lying.
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
...
Miss Hanekawa... isn't that skirt... a little too short...?
Hm?

And I was thinking—maybe it's because you let me smack you the other day.
FOR WHATEVER REASON, I FELT INCREDIBLY REFRESHED WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING!
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE FELT THIS WAY—OR EVEN...
IT MIGHT BE THE FIRST TIME I'VE FELT THIS WAY IN MY WHOLE LIFE!
Which is why I shortened my skirt by one inch for each letter in "t-h-a-n-k-s"!
As a reward.
THIS IS YOUR IDEA OF A REWARD?!
FWISH
...

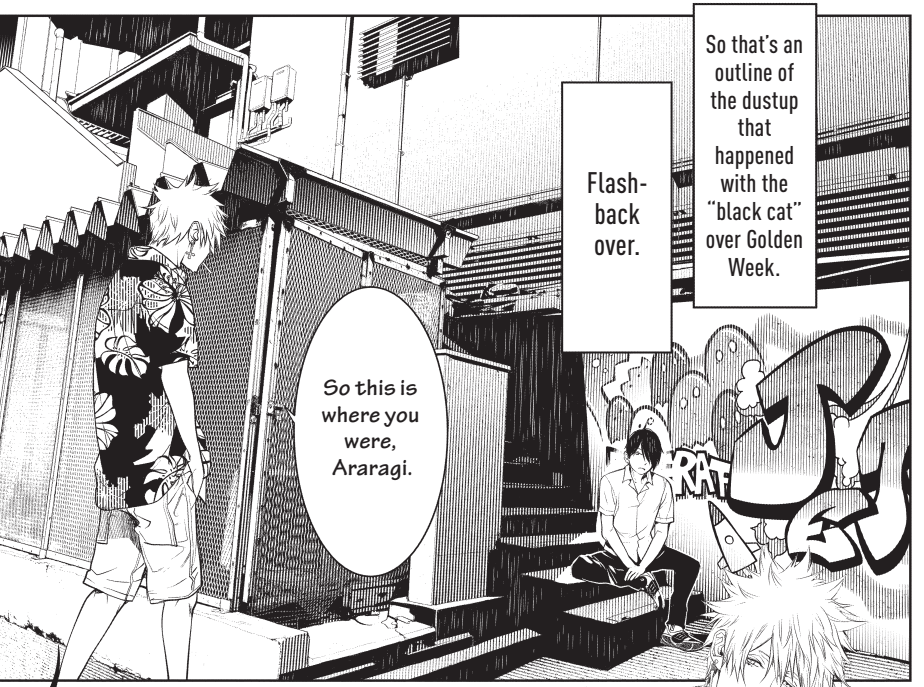
...
SORRY.
DOING THIS... REALLY LOWERS YOUR LEVEL OF SECURITY, HUH.
W-WELL... CONSIDER IT A PART OF THE REWARD...
Oh my, Miss Hanekawa.

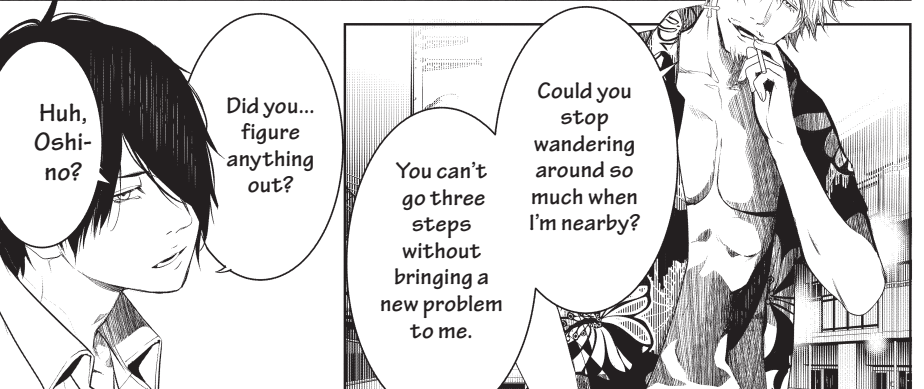
You've forgotten to put on underwear.
Given up on the honor student character, perhaps?
I personally liked you better that way.
HUH?!
...Oh.
I'm wearing some...
And it seems you had an unexcused absence.
BAM
The thing about humans...
WHY DON'T WE TALK SOME MORE?
THAT'S THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER SPOKEN TO ME, MISS SENJOGAHARA!

There's an urge to solve all those problems, but you'd be surprised by how many people will accept you, problems and all.
...is that, in a way, it's natural for them to live while facing one problem after the next.
So we keep putting our problems off.
On the other hand, actually solving one problem could make another one worse, or it could get you into a new problem.
It could be that our lives are defined—by our problems.


...so we can work hard.
It could be that we're working hard to dream...
...is all wrong.
the idea that we're working hard to make our dreams come true...
When you look at it that way,

I wonder—what kind of dreams does Hanekawa have?



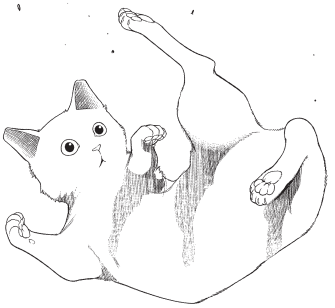


THWAK
She really doesn't seem to remember a thing about Golden Week.
If we're just talking about Missy Class President—she doesn't have a single memory of being Black Hanekawa.
But... isn't that odd?
She took the stress that had built up toward her family over seventeen years...
...and let it all out until there was nothing left—so is it really possible for the same level of stress to build up inside of her in just one month?
"Black Hanekawa."
I thought that was a pretty accurate name for her.

That dark, dark, dark, blacked-out being...
TWITCH
JIGGLE
JIGGLE
...was unmistakably Tsubasa Hanekawa.
Is it a split personality or something?
So does—that side of Hanekawa have nothing to do with cats?
Nope, that's not it.
Our cat is a cat, Araragi.
I dunno about when she was with you...
...but Missy Class President really did come into contact with the Afflicting Cat at some point.

So many different—faces.
Hun-dreds.
Hanekawa has—dozens.
...Ngh...
None of them are Hanekawa.
But all of them—are Hanekawa.

It, too, may have been a victim here.



tossed into those countless Hanekawas—was a cat.

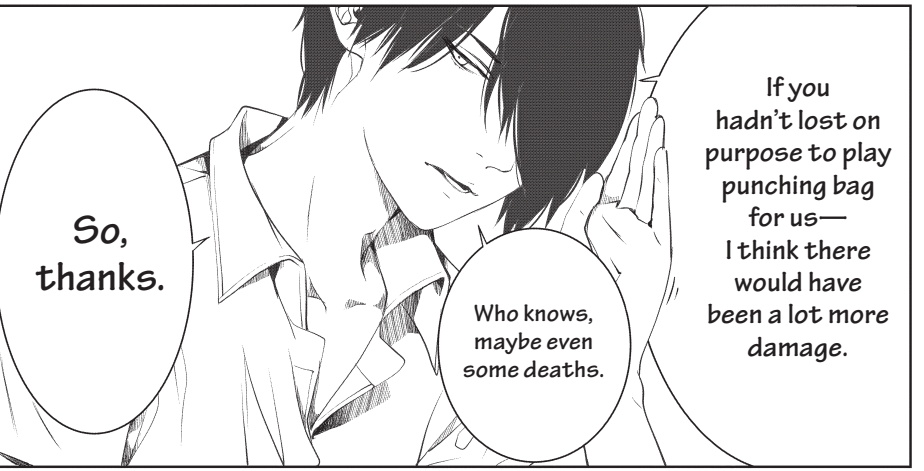
And tossed into that—

You have to wonder...

...*which* was the one to be possessed by an aberration?

KEEP OUT
She must've been able to let go of the cat whenever she wanted.
But she put all the blame on it instead.
That was just more convenient for her.
And so... she used that as an excuse to go on a spree and have all the wicked fun she wanted— huh?
...God, what a handful ...
There's no such thing as a girl who isn't a handful, Araragi.
Well...
...I did it because I felt annoyed.
Ah- nyo-ed.

Did that happen?
Hm?
You were a mess after losing something like a hundred fights against Black Hanekawa, right?
...Oh, I guess I still haven't thanked you yet.


So, thanks.
Who knows, maybe even some deaths.
If you hadn't lost on purpose to play punching bag for us— I think there would have been a lot more damage.

What should I do about her...?
SIGH
Well...
The bigger issue—is Hanekawa.

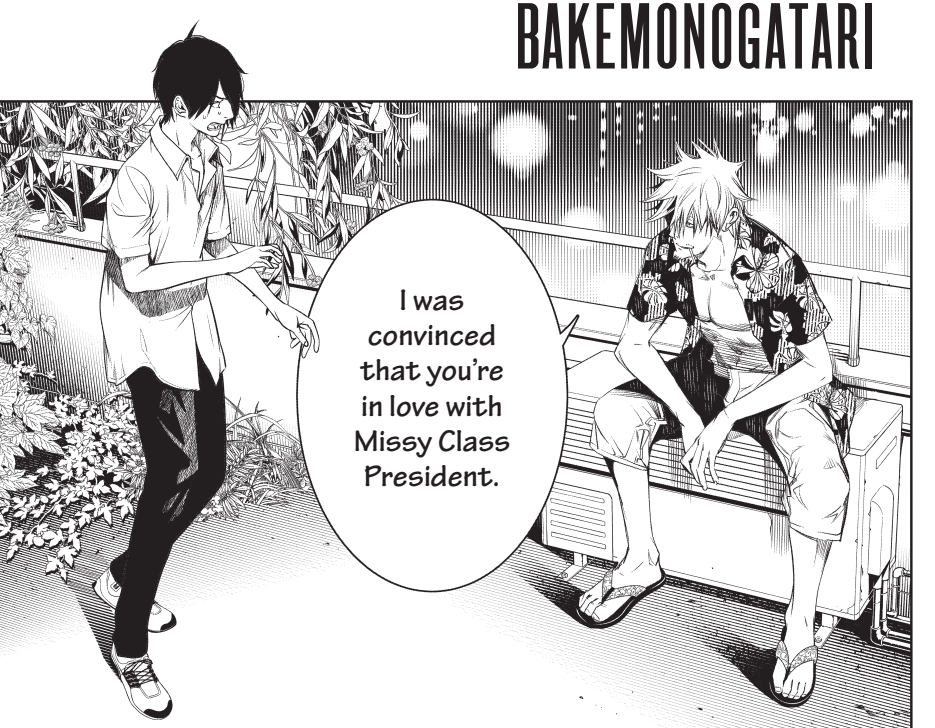
SCRATCH
...

Why don't you marry her?

...
Huh ?!!
Wh... Where'd that come from?
I'm giving you a way to resolve this.
The way I see it, everything is nice and settled if you just marry Missy Class President.
She'd finally get the family she always wanted... and it should get rid of the cat.

I was convinced that you're in love with Missy Class President.

BAKEMONOGATARI

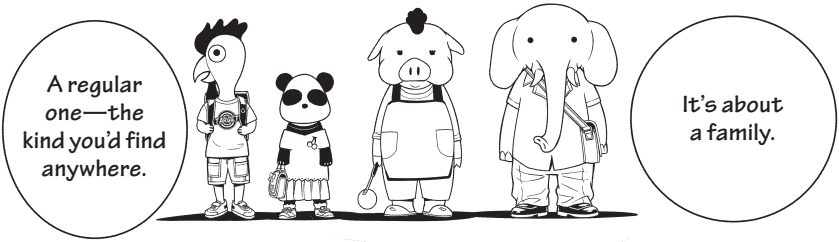


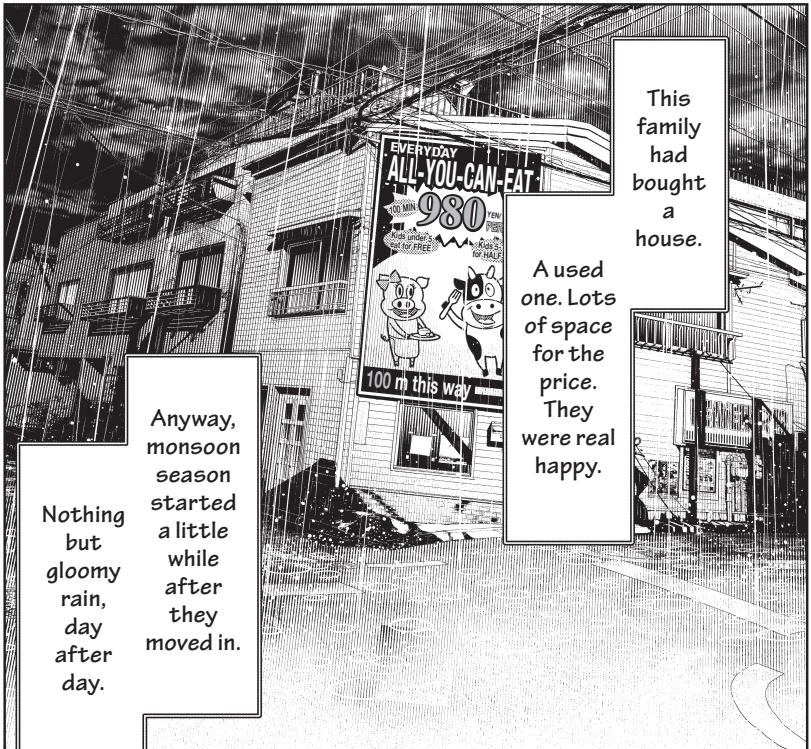
We need to consider Hanekawa's feelings here... It's not like she's asked me to help her or anything—right?
First off...
Er... Li-Listen, you need to stop being ridiculous.

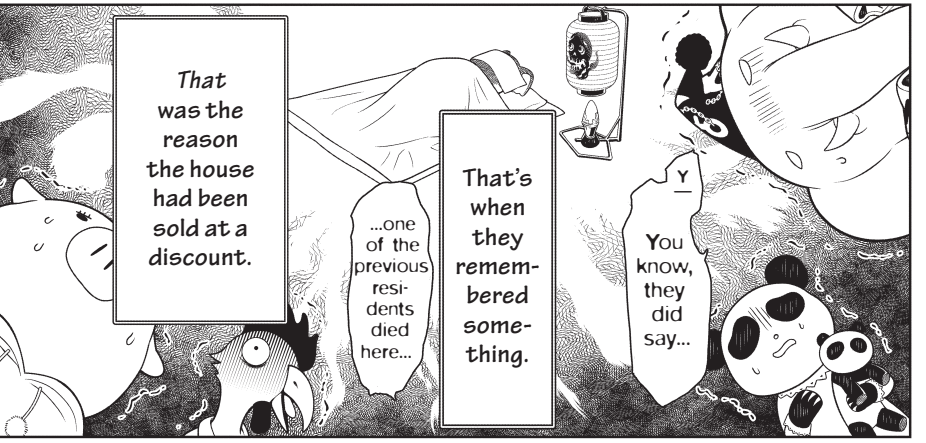
Even when it comes to Golden Week, I feel like I got involved when I didn't need to—that maybe it was none of my business.
You ended up being the one she relied on, Oshino.

Like, maybe, I just got in her way.
Like I butted in—like I stuck my nose right in her business.
That's right.
Like you were just butting in?

Hm?
... Ara-ragi.
I've got a story for you.
Mind listening?


A regular one—the kind you'd find anywhere.
It's about a family.

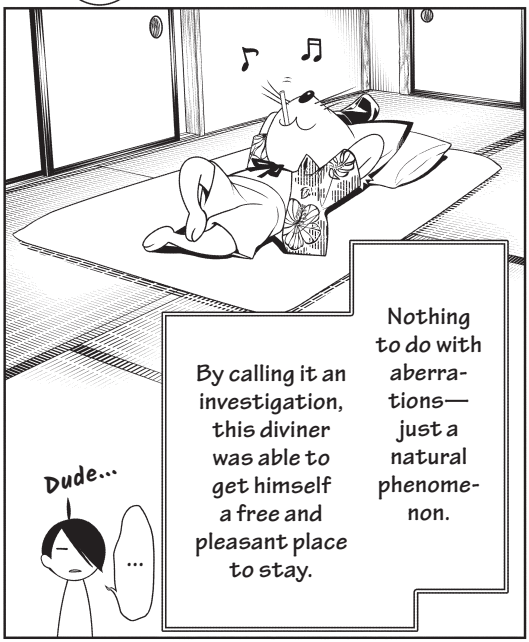

EVERYDAY
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT
100 MIN
980
YEN
Kids under 5 eat for FREE
Kids 6-12 pay for HALF
100 m this way
This family had bought a house.
A used one. Lots of space for the price. They were real happy.
Anyway, monsoon season started a little while after they moved in.
Nothing but gloomy rain, day after day.

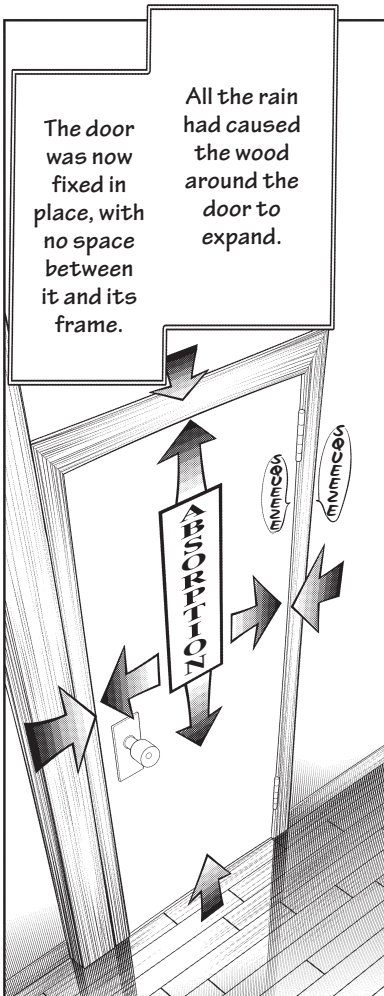


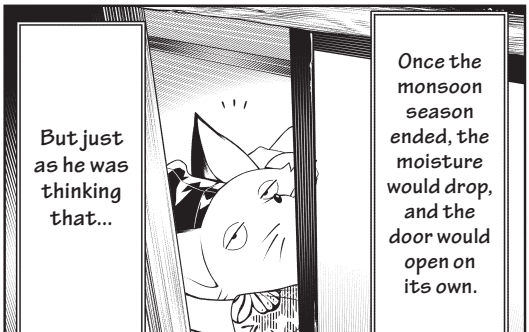
That's when they asked a shady diviner who happened to be in town to solve their problem.

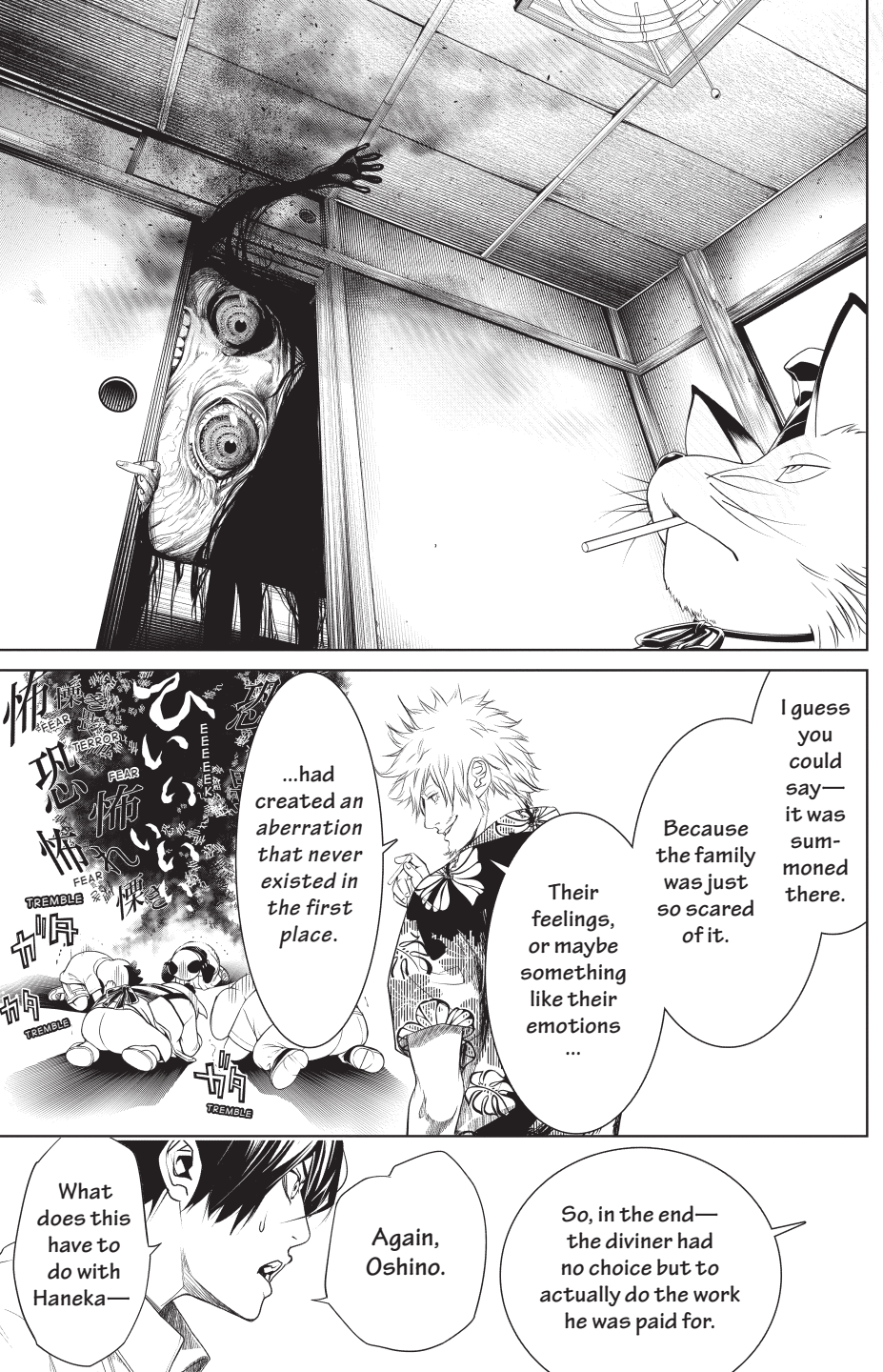
It was an aberration that *forbids entry.*

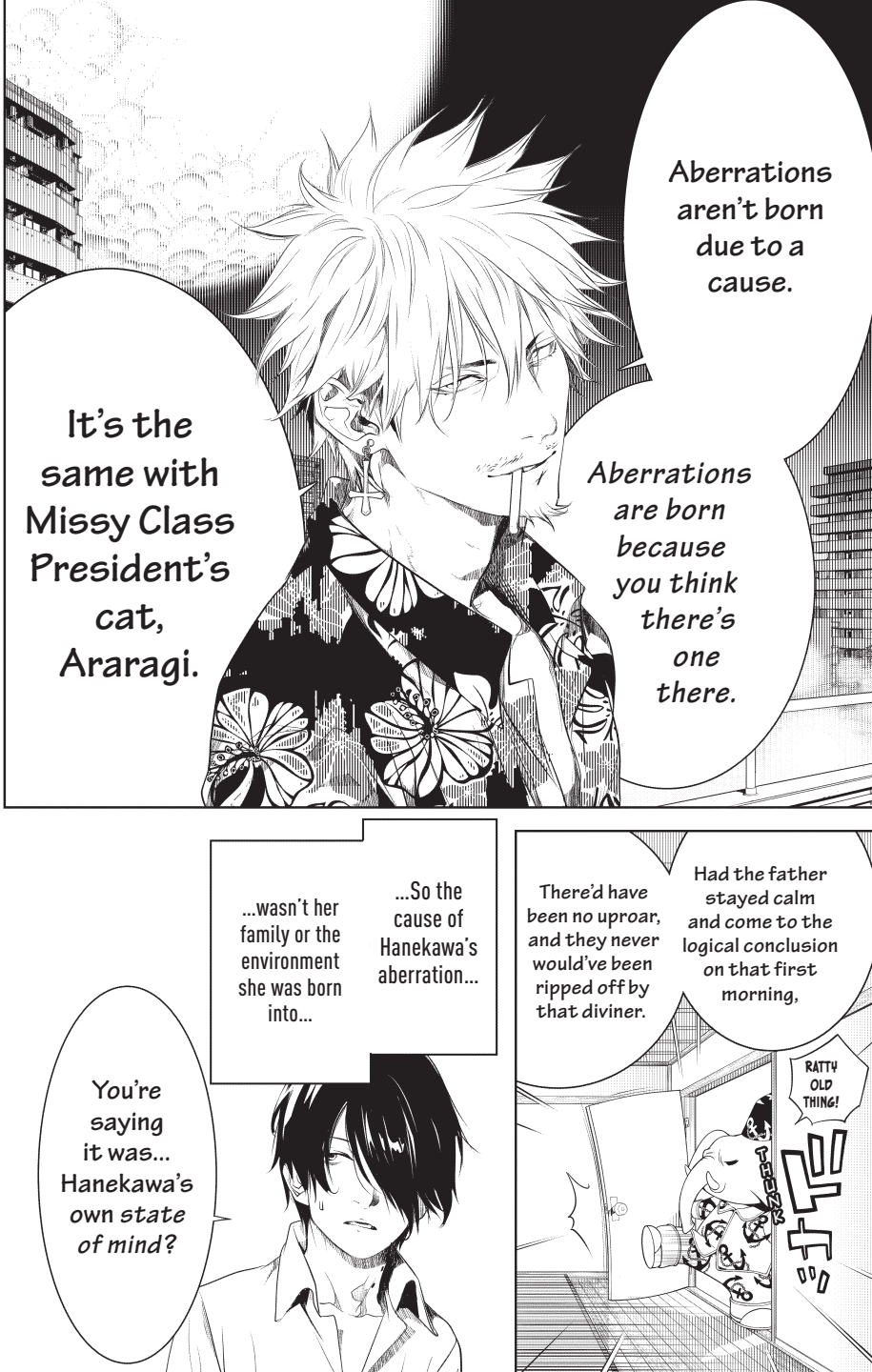
Why this story?
Were you even listening to me?
Ha haa.
So, anyway...
The diviner figured out the reason in no time.


Nothing to do with aberrations—just a natural phenomenon.
By calling it an investigation, this diviner was able to get himself a free and pleasant place to stay.
Dude...
...

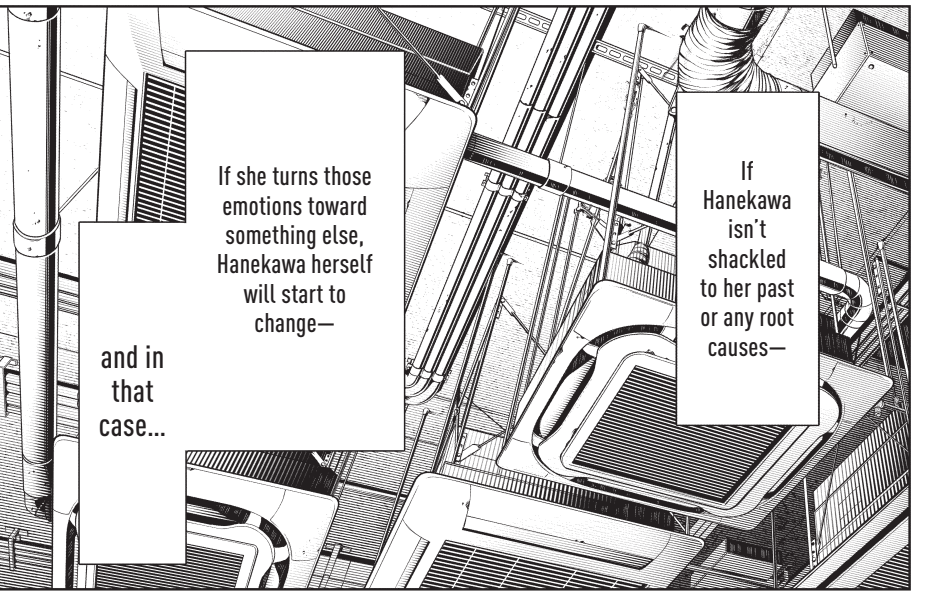

All the rain had caused the wood around the door to expand.
The door was now fixed in place, with no space between it and its frame.
ABSORPTION
SQUEEZE
SQUEEZE

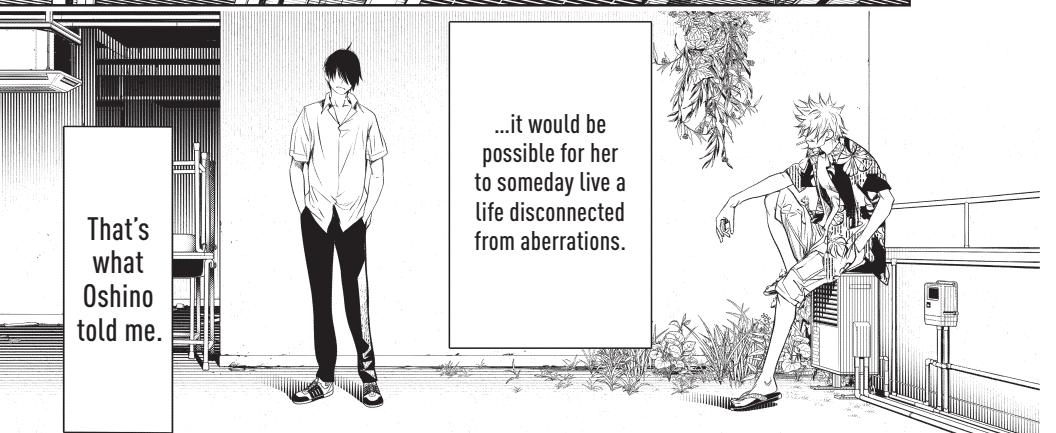

Once the monsoon season ended, the moisture would drop, and the door would open on its own.
But just as he was thinking that...


I guess you could say— it was summoned there.
Because the family was just so scared of it.
Their feelings, or maybe something like their emotions ...
...had created an aberration that never existed in the first place.
So, in the end— the diviner had no choice but to actually do the work he was paid for.
Again, Oshino.
What does this have to do with Haneka—


Aberrations aren't born due to a cause.
Aberrations are born because you think there's one there.
It's the same with Missy Class President's cat, Araragi.
Had the father stayed calm and come to the logical conclusion on that first morning,
There'd have been no uproar, and they never would've been ripped off by that diviner.
RATTY OLD THING!
THUNK
...So the cause of Hanekawa's aberration...
...wasn't her family or the environment she was born into...
You're saying it was... Hanekawa's own state of mind?

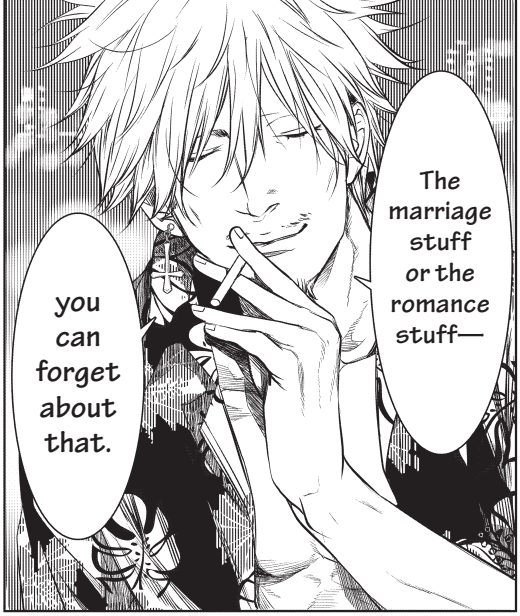
...if you don't find them, then they may as well never have existed to begin with.
Aberrations—are everywhere. But—the thing is...


If Hanekawa isn't shackled to her past or any root causes—
If she turns those emotions toward something else, Hanekawa herself will start to change—
and in that case...


...it would be possible for her to someday live a life disconnected from aberrations.
That's what Oshino told me.

So...

...why don't you go and be Missy Class President's lifelong best friend?



Best friends.

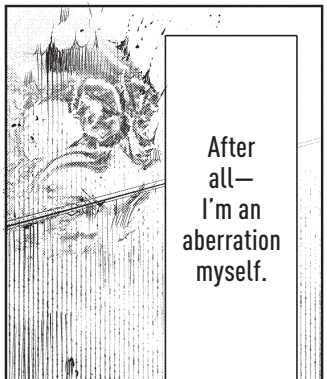
...
Always ...
...by her side.
Having someone by your side.
That's all it takes for someone to go and get saved on their own.
When she's down.
When she's in trouble.
I'd always be right there—by her side.
That might be the one and only thing I can do for her.

Oshino isn't saying anything about it—but...
...he has to have noticed.
What happened then.
FWOOM
GSSFT
We'll always be the same! We'll always be together!
This is fine, Hanekawa!
The two of us will always, always, always be friends!
Was that really the right thing to say?
And indeed—I did say that.
I said that, but—I have to wonder.
During spring break.

She took the blood of Kiss-Shot Acerola-Orion Heart-Under-Blade deep into her body.
To be more accurate, she took in *the blood of the king of aberrations via my body*.
No.
...took in my blood...
Hane-kawa...
That's when Hane-kawa clearly began to harbor an aber-ration.
That was the mo-ment.
Aberration
But *before that in-cident*— she was just a human.
She must have always had some kind of affinity for it.
It's my fault.

If things keep escalating like this, there's a very real chance that Hanekawa might take somebody's life.
If only that hadn't happened, then maybe we never would've had any cat trouble to deal with over Golden Week.

...so long as I'm around.
Hanekawa can never get away from aberrations ...


After all— I'm an aberration myself.

...and kill her.
Then someone— probably Oshino— will exorcise her...
Not to Hanekawa, and not to Oshino.
There's no way I'm doing that.

Won't being near her ...
...just bring more and more misfortune to Hanekawa?
LEAN
KRUNCH
Ha haa. You really are indecisive.
Which is to say, you just really piss me off.
You know reality's no different from an aberration, right?
Wai—
Huh?
Huh?

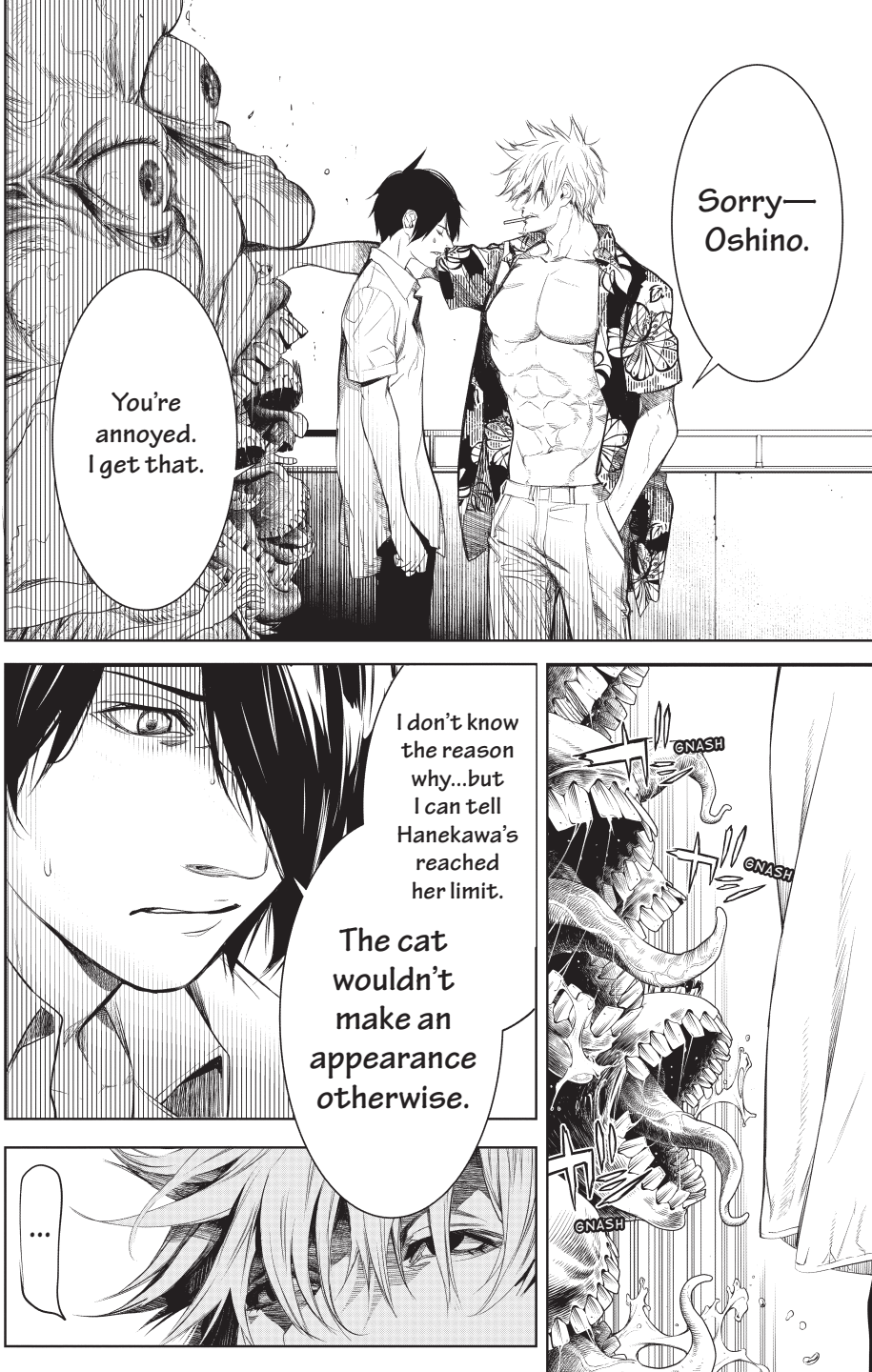
BOOM
DD

...
If something you couldn't see before makes itself shown...
...that means you've reached a terminus.
Ara-ragi.

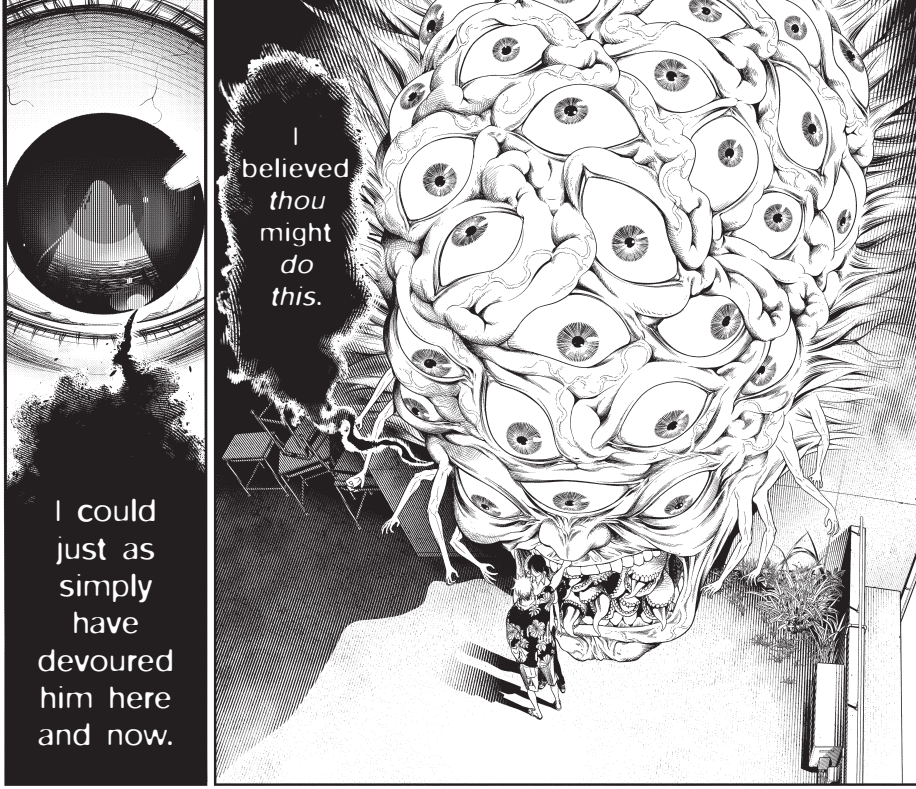
ooooo

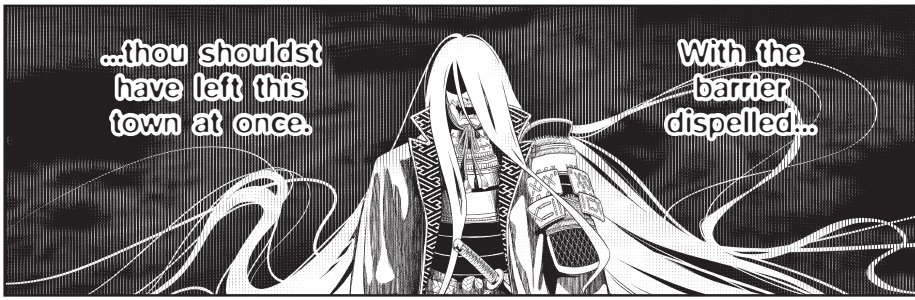
ガシ
GNASH
バサ
FLUTTER
バサ
FLUTTER
バサ
FLUTTER
バサ
FLUTTER
バサ
FLUTTER

SMAK
SMAK
GNASH
GNASH


Sorry—
Oshino.
You're
annoyed.
I get that.
I don't know
the reason
why...but
I can tell
Hanekawa's
reached
her limit.
The cat
wouldn't
make an
appearance
otherwise.
...
CNASH
CNASH
CNASH

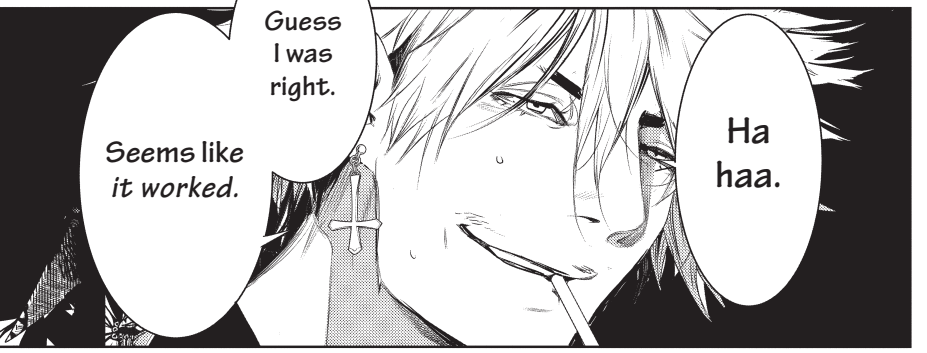
Though... you know...
You can tell me to always stay by Hanekawa's side,
but when it really comes down to it— there's nothing I can do.
ZHLRT
CHOMP
PREE
SNAPSNAP
CHOMP
KRAKL
SNAP
Thou...
PAIKRAK PAIKRAK
SNAP SNAP
All that stuff you said about marriage could be a joke,
but even so, if I could help her in some way, I would...
Though, I have to wonder if I'd just be getting in her way or dragging her down somehow.

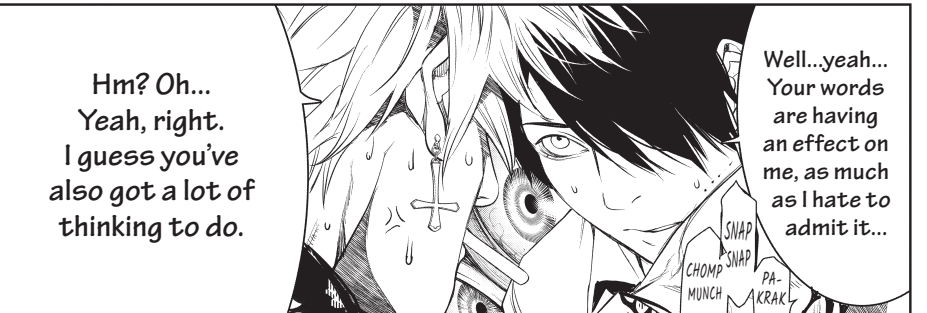

I could just as simply have devoured him here and now.
I believed *thou* might *do this.*


...thou shouldst have left this town at once.
With the barrier dispelled...

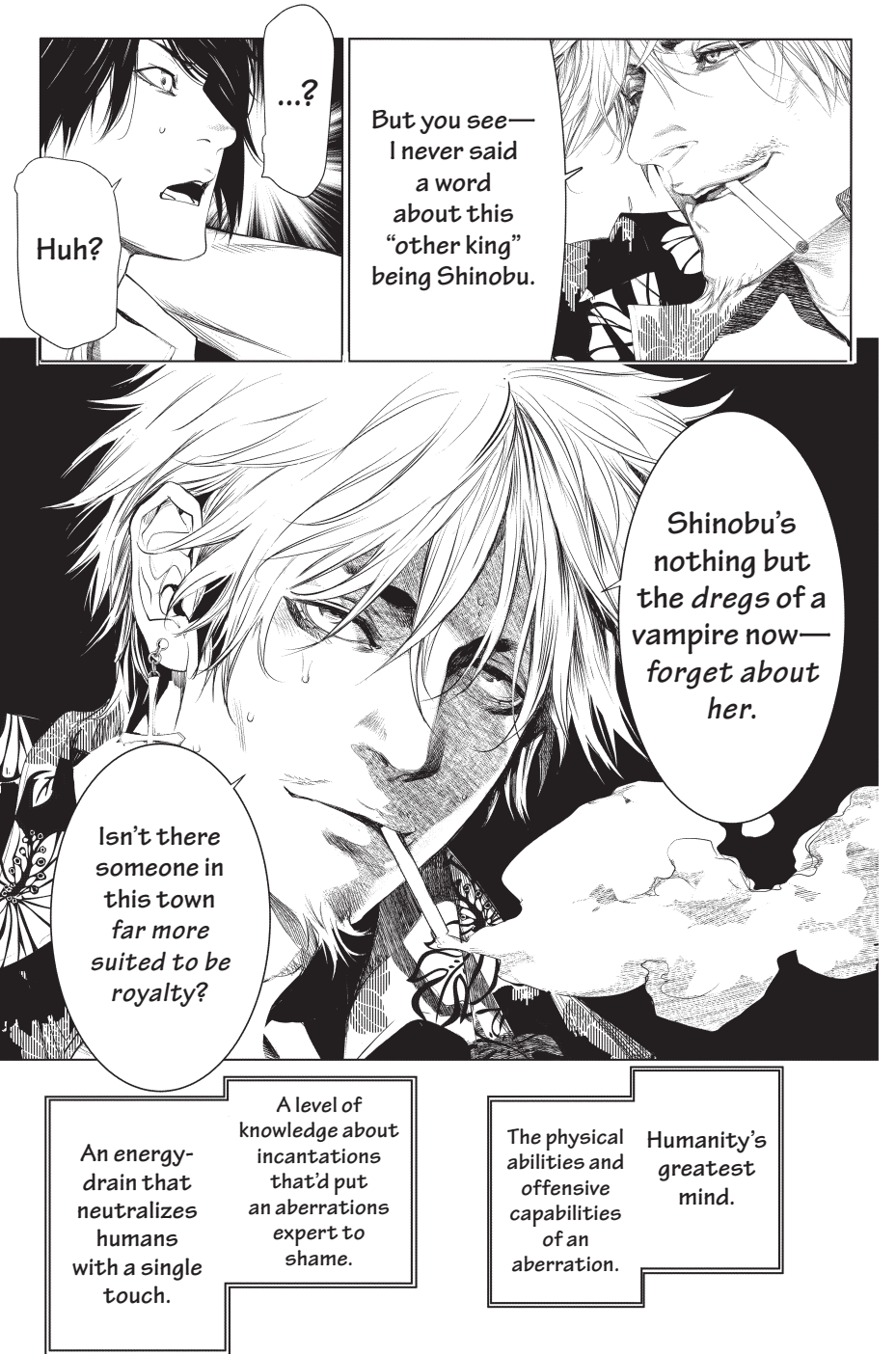
That'd been my plan, too.
Yeah, well.

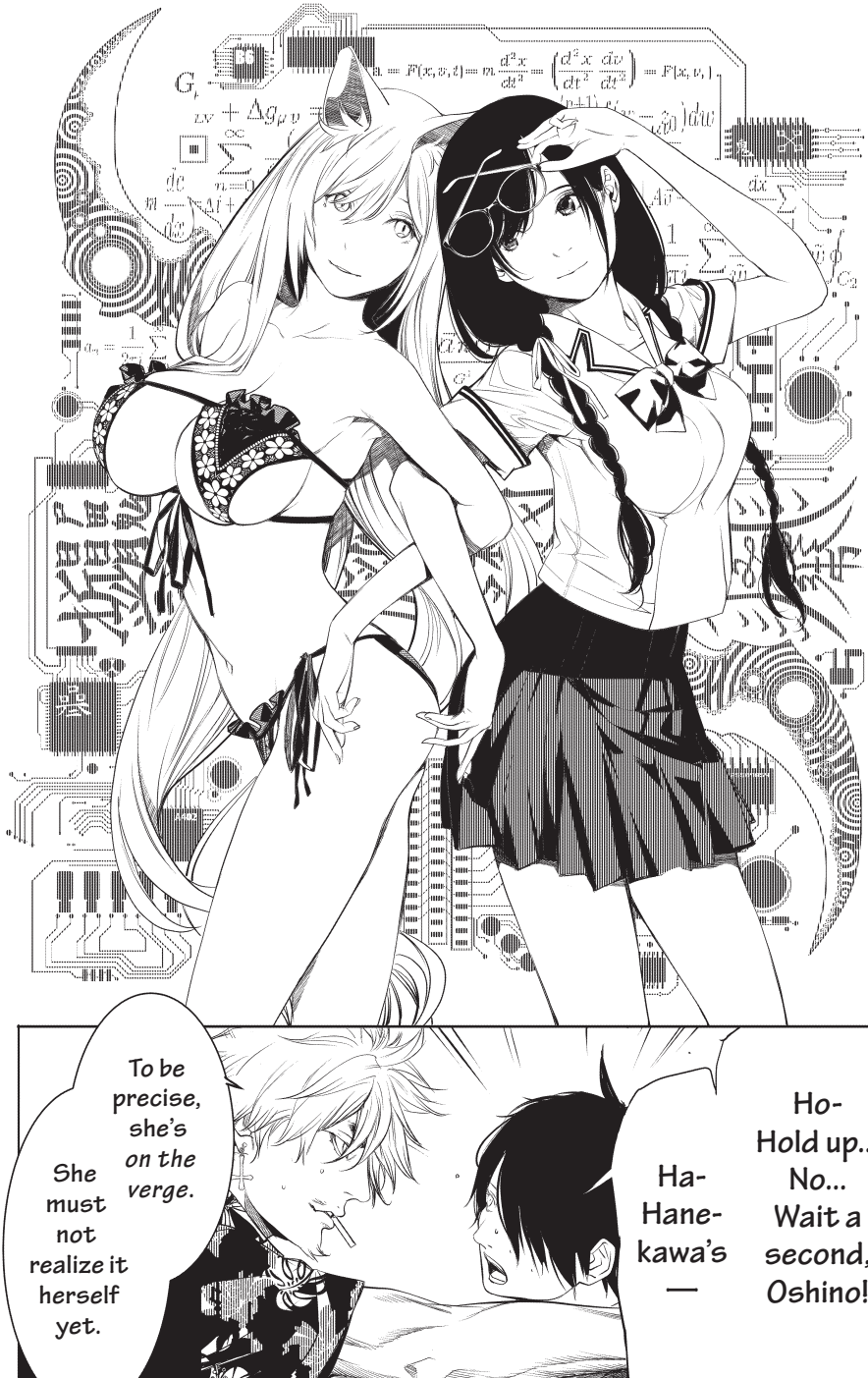
I had spared thee, for thou art a useful fellow.
But what thou hadst this one do the other day—
'twas unneces-sary.


Ha haa.
Guess I was right.
Seems like it worked.

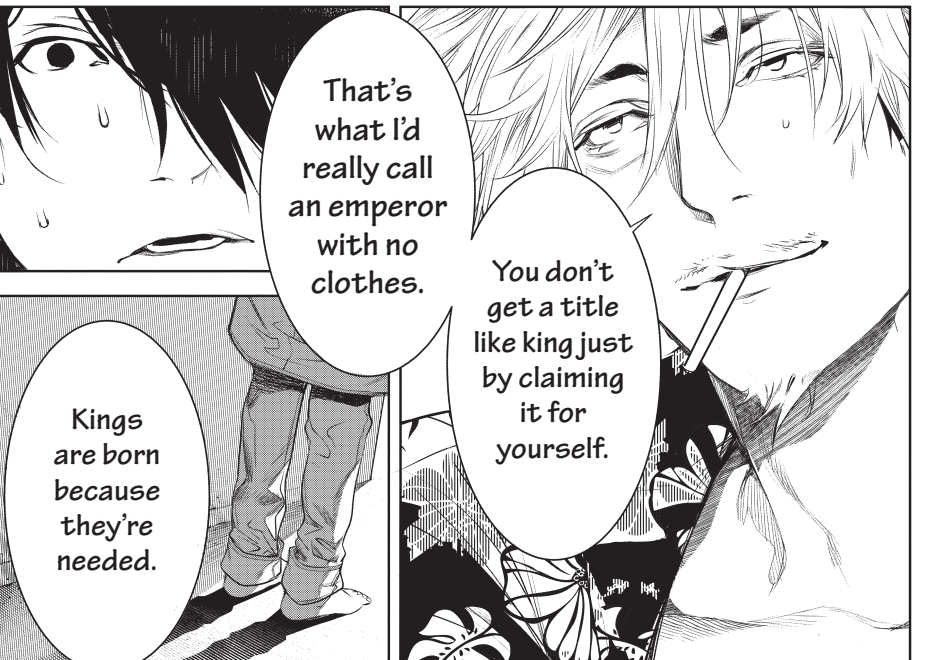

Well...yeah... Your words are having an effect on me, as much as I hate to admit it...
SNAP SNAP
CHOMP MUNCH
PA-KRAK
Hm? Oh... Yeah, right. I guess you've also got a lot of thinking to do.

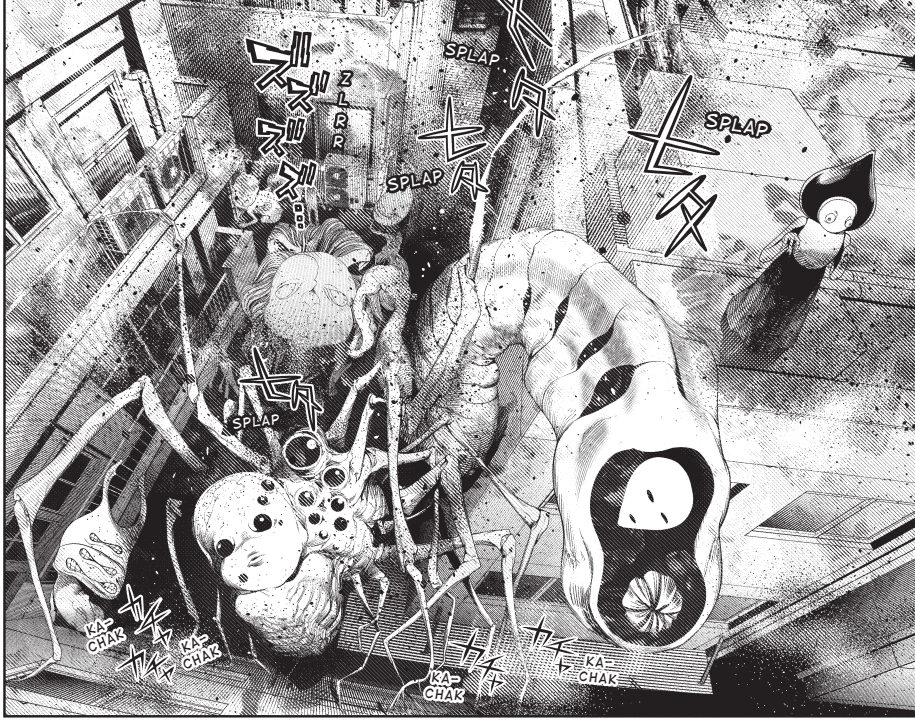
...the other king of aberrations.


...?
Huh?
But you see—I never said a word about this "other king" being Shinobu.
Shinobu's nothing but the *dregs* of a vampire now—*forget about her.*
Isn't there someone in this town *far more suited to be royalty?*
An energy-drain that neutralizes humans with a single touch.
A level of knowledge about incantations that'd put an aberrations expert to shame.
The physical abilities and offensive capabilities of an aberration.
Humanity's greatest mind.


Ho-
Hold up...
No...
Wait a
second,
Oshino!
Ha-
Hane-
kawa's
—
To be
precise,
she's
on the
verge.
She
must
not
realize it
herself
yet.

But the *bad things* in this town...
...need a new king of aberrations.


That's what I'd really call an emperor with no clothes.
You don't get a title like king just by claiming it for yourself.
Kings are born because they're needed.


SPLAP
SPLAP
SPLAP
SPLAP
ZLRR
KA-CHAK
KA-CHAK
KA-CHAK
KA-CHAK

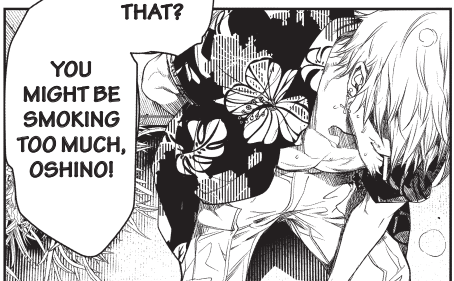
You don't really believe that a person only wants your help when they ask directly...right?
We've all got things that aren't easy to say on a whim.
Right, Araragi?

Listen... I'm not saying she needs to be domesticated.
But what I do think—is that it's better if someone was there to keep an eye on her.

SHOOO

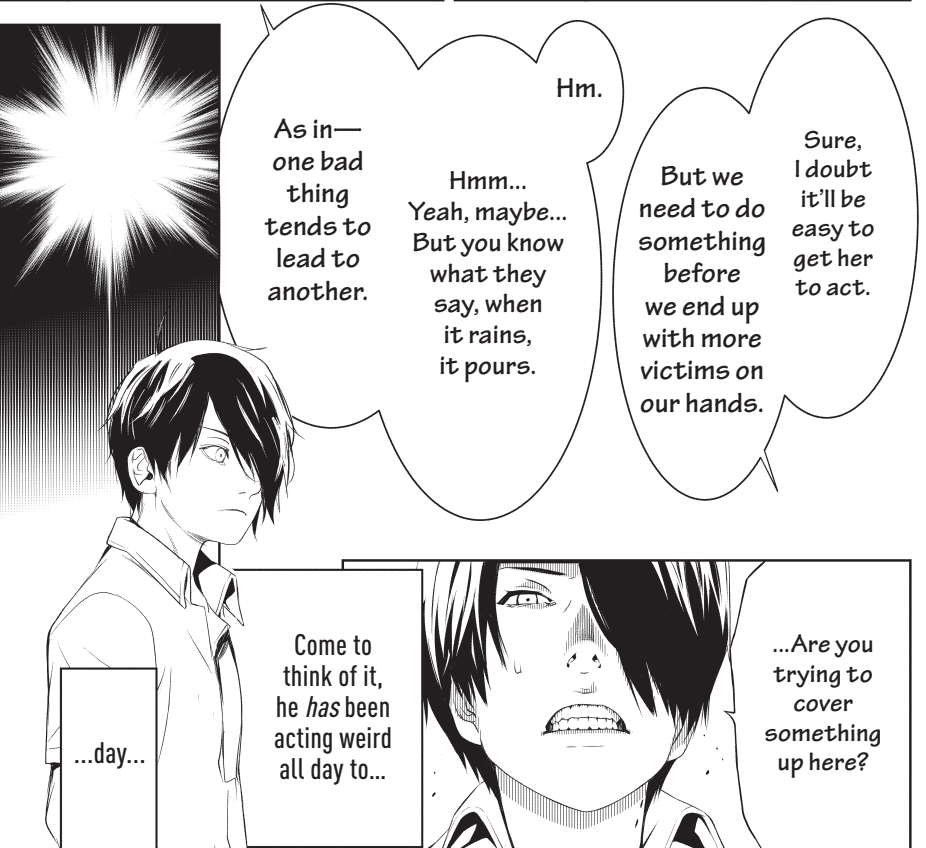
BWOOF

HAKK!
ドン


WHAT WAS THAT?
YOU MIGHT BE SMOKING TOO MUCH, OSHINO!

FSSSSS

Mmh... Well... Yeah.
You're right about that, but...
Bring Shinobu over.
Isn't asking her for help the only way to deal with this?
Putting whatever the future holds aside... what we need to do now is deal with the cat right in front of us.

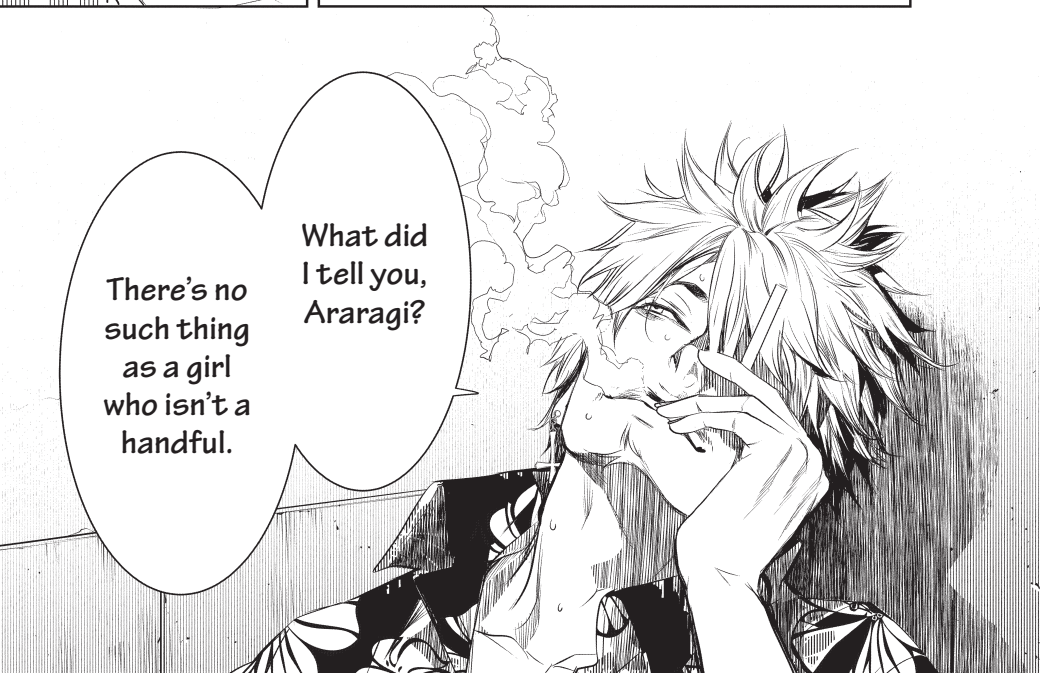

Hm.
As in— one bad thing tends to lead to another.
Hmm... Yeah, maybe... But you know what they say, when it rains, it pours.
But we need to do something before we end up with more victims on our hands.
Sure, I doubt it'll be easy to get her to act.
...day...
Come to think of it, he *has* been acting weird all day to...
...Are you trying to cover something up here?

I spotted a vampire girl here yesterday.
What a coinci-dence.
There's something I wanted you to ask me, too.
...
Oshino... There's something I want to ask you.
Yep. That's the question.
WHAT HAPPENED TO SHINOBU?
...
...
...

Shi-
nobu
...
...went off on a journey of self-discovery.

KER-SHANK
One bad thing leads to another. When it rains, it pours.
SGRRRK
KER-SHANK
IT'S JUST ONE THING AFTER ANOTH-ER!
...AGH! DAMMIT!
KER-SHANK
KER-SHANK

She knows that—better than anyone.
BAM
SKRRR
Shinobu—has to stay close to me.
She'll starve to death in a week or so if she doesn't drink my blood.
And she still chose to leave—which means...!
...NGH!

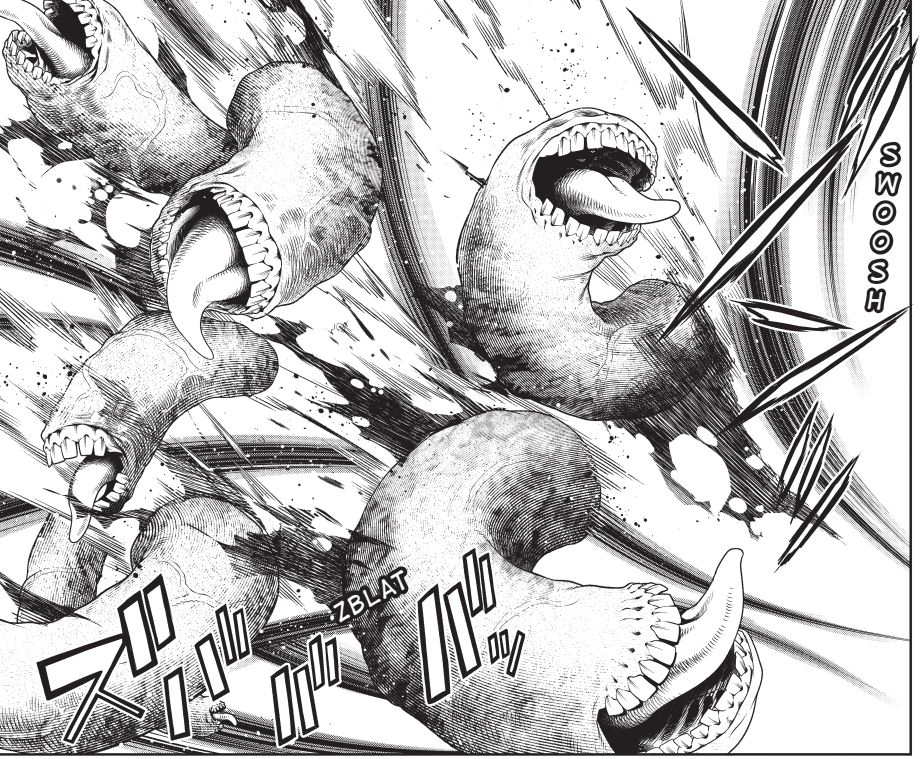

What did I tell you, Araragi?
There's no such thing as a girl who isn't a handful.

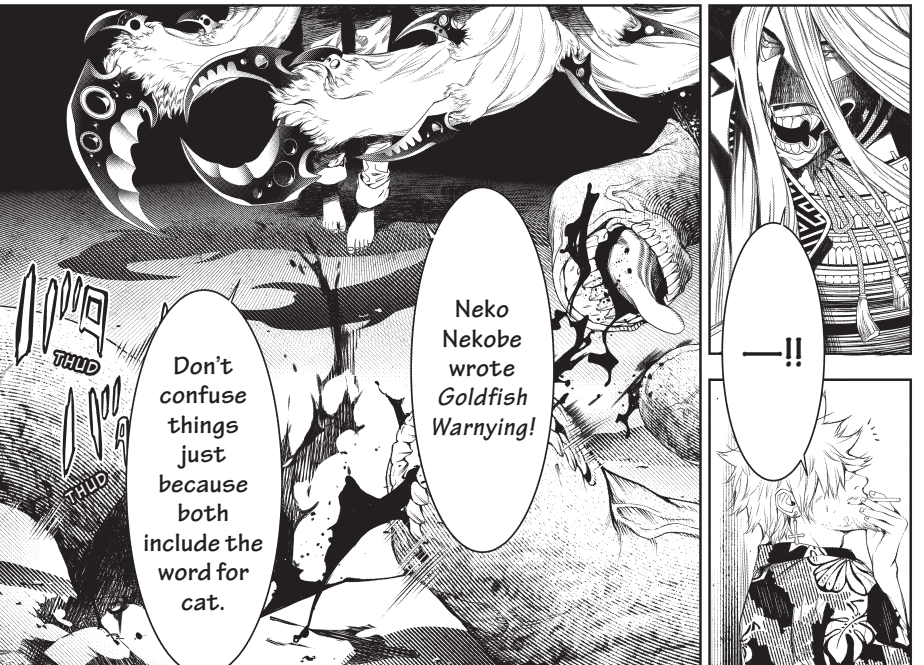
That was something you also had to find out for yourself...
Right, my dear senior?

ZSSSSHHH

Ha haa. I do have to say, though.
All this reminds me of that one manga. Neko-Neko Fantasia.
By, uh... You know ...
That author, Neko Nekobe— Ah, c'mon...

No tact at all...


SWOOSH
ZBLAT


—!!
Neko Nekobe wrote *Goldfish Warnying!*
Don't confuse things just because both include the word for cat.
THUD
THUD

That's the kind of joke I was setting up, hoping someone'd bite.
Ha haa. That's it.
...
...
That Hawaiian Shirt guy still has some use.
You can kill him whenever you want—
Meow.
SWOOSH

BWOOF
ZSSHH
Araragi.
Araragi ...
Now this is a surprise.
If you only need to say a few words to make something like *that* back off—what use do you have for me, exactly?
You don't know, do you?
Let's see—judging by...
...your face...

Job request for me?

It's the fact that I'd fallen in love.
With an inhuman power.
With an inhuman something. With an inhuman world.

SHHKK
SHHKK
SHHKK
SHHKK
That fact was the one thing capable of freeing me from this dull world.
That's what I believed.
I...
...was fascinated by a vampire.

Araragi
...
You don't know, do you?
That for so long, I was my stress.
It was all that was inside of me, after all.
But that stress went away during Golden Week.
I died.
Which is why there's nothing inside of me now.
... nothing ...
Aside from these feelings, there's...
...supporting me.
ZSSHH

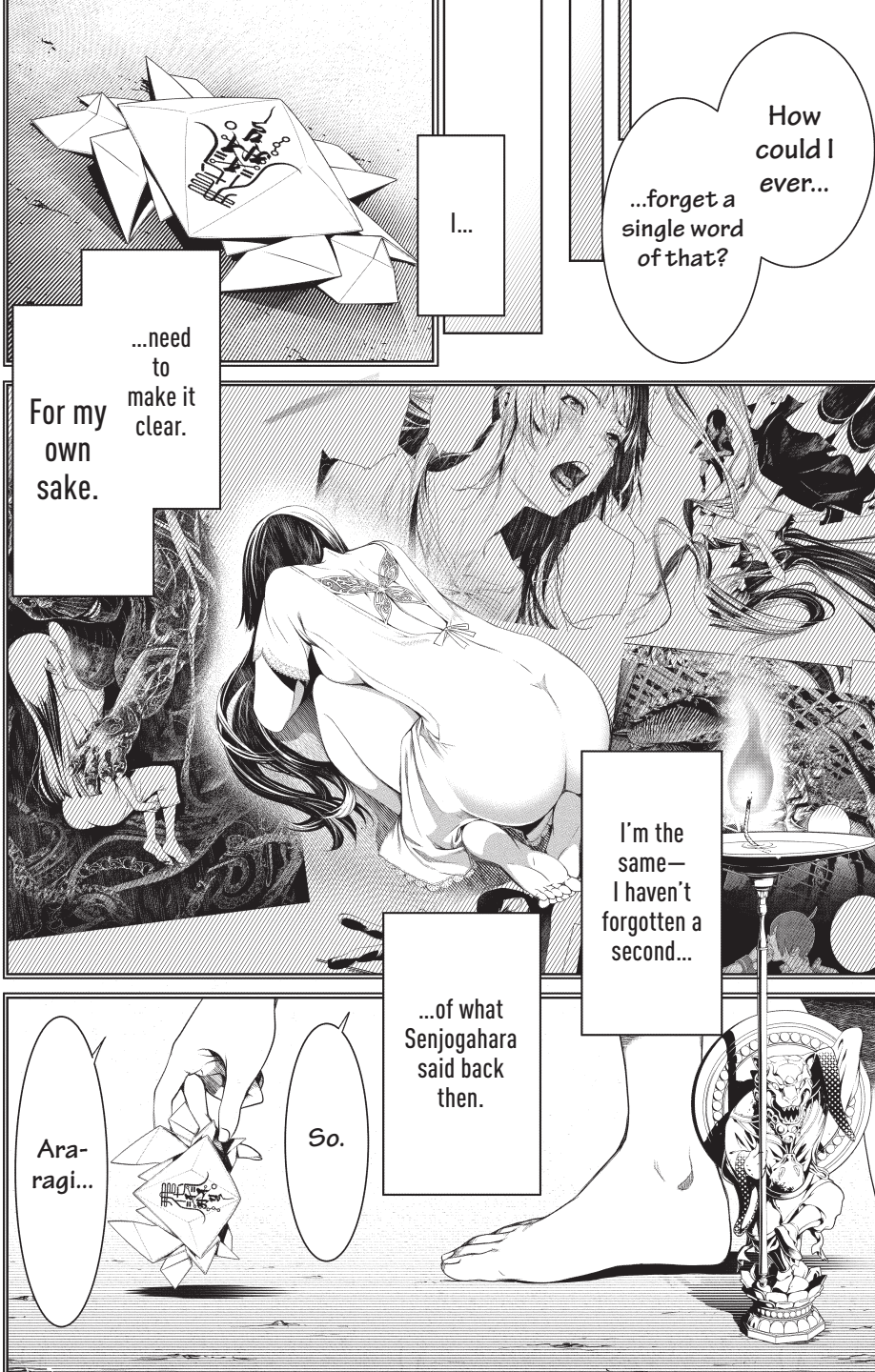
SHINO-
BUUU
!!!

SHADDAP!
RATTLE
ガラッ
SORRY!
There's no reason she'd respond...
...
And wait...
Is she still even in this town ...?
Today is—
June 13.
Contacts
Favorites
A day to remember, one where my personal Hell would come to an end—
or at least, that was the plan.
...
She's not picking up at all...
PRRRING
PRRRING
Maybe she's in the bath?
But I can't give up on that yet.

If you're late for our date, I'm stripping you naked and shoving you in the girls' locker room.
...
That's the first thing she says to me...?
No? Not particularly?
It was too much of a bother to pick up the phone, and I let it sit in my pocket without checking who the caller was, but it rang for so long that I gave up and checked only to see that it was you, which made me think I didn't have to pick up after all, so I went to press the power button to hang up on you but accidentally pressed the call button instead and had no choice but to take it.
So, what do you want?
Why would I want anything from you now?!
She doesn't show any signs of letting up, even on the phone...
Senjogahara.
Could you hear me out?

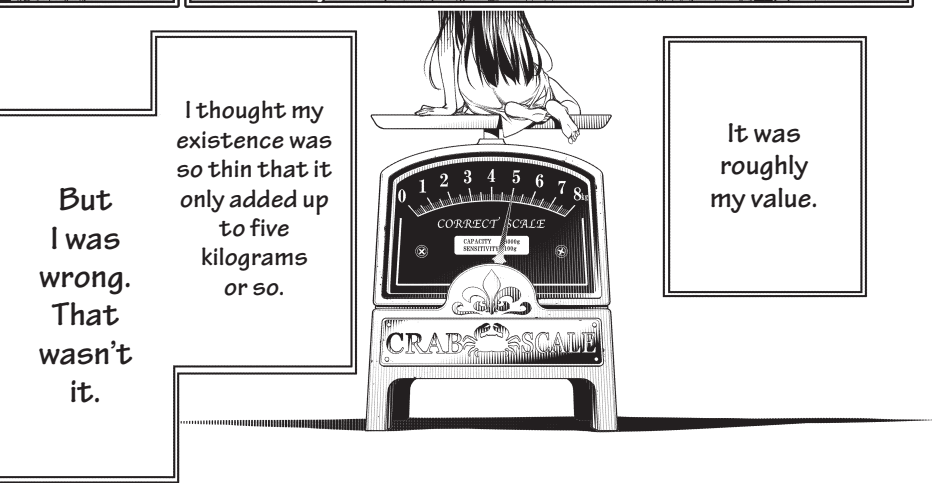
Hm... Huh. Is that so.
The, uh, blonde kid?
Shi-nobu? Oh.
Put Part B together with Saito.
Instructions on P6 of the print-out.
Thank you!!
What is it?
So?
I'm not!
I guess I have no choice if you're getting down on all fours.
SKETCH BOOK
Wait.
Are you still at school?!
I am.
And not a thing is working the way it should.
It's utterly ridiculous, and the fact that she was able to manage this madness— makes me question her sanity.
Things are a mess here because Miss Hanekawa left school early.
I'm not helping you find her.

To be frank, even speaking to you like this is a waste of valuable time.
I'm hanging up.
Ah—
Wa...Wait a second.
Um ...
I was convinced ...
...that you're in love with Missy Class President.
Uh... ...Senjogahara.
So... Um...
Do you remember...what we talked about after we took care of things with your crab?
...Araragi.
If you're going to spout nonsense, could you please do it in moderation?


How could I ever...
...forget a single word of that?
I...
...need to make it clear.
For my own sake.
I'm the same— I haven't forgotten a second...
...of what Senjogahara said back then.
So.
Ara-ragi...

Are you not going to get your vampirism fixed?
By Mister Oshino?
No. I chose this for myself.
I'm always going to be this way.
...I see.

...
I...
...was always thinking about it.
Why did I weigh just five kilograms— why was I left with just that?


It was roughly my value.
I thought my existence was so thin that it only added up to five kilograms or so.
But I was wrong. That wasn't it.
CORRECT SCALE
CRAB SCALE

In other words, everything aside from the five kilograms left behind, the vast majority of myself—was my heart.
The crab—it shouldered all the weight of my heart.
It was the other way around.
I was someone who was almost all heart.

There wasn't much to what was left behind.
That's all.

At least that's how it is...

...for me.

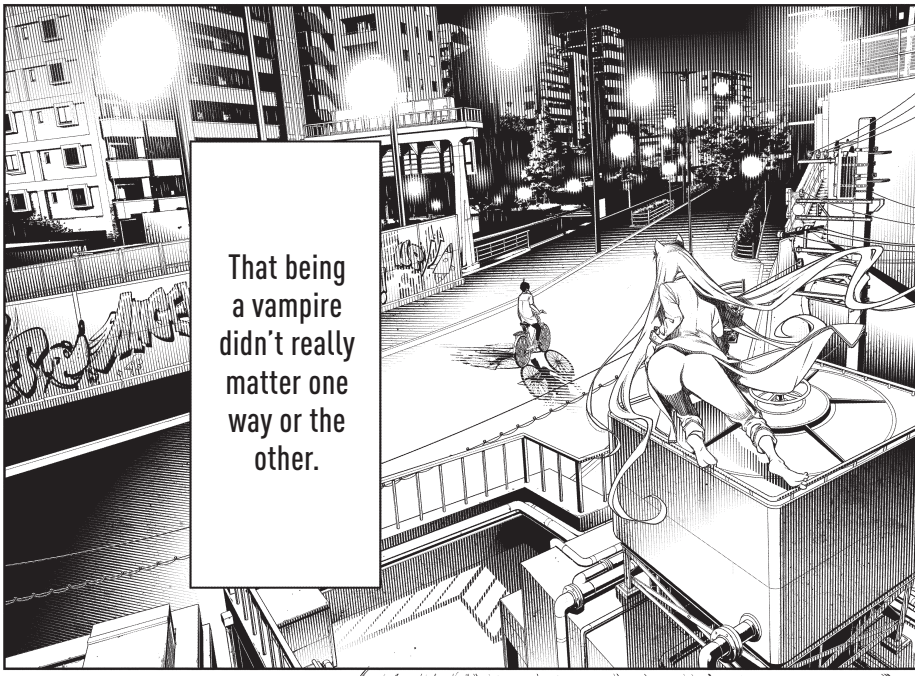
...
It might be— that her feelings then...
...couldn't have been understood by anyone aside from me.

“My value as a person mostly comes from my heart.”
That was an idea...
...that had never so much as crossed my mind before.
I thought that being a vampire...
...was the responsibility I was left with because of the mess I’d made.
I thought that a large part of why I needed to keep on living—
that the value of my existence—was in being a vampire.

That it was far more important for me to keep being me.

But Hitagi Senjogahara ...

...told me something then.



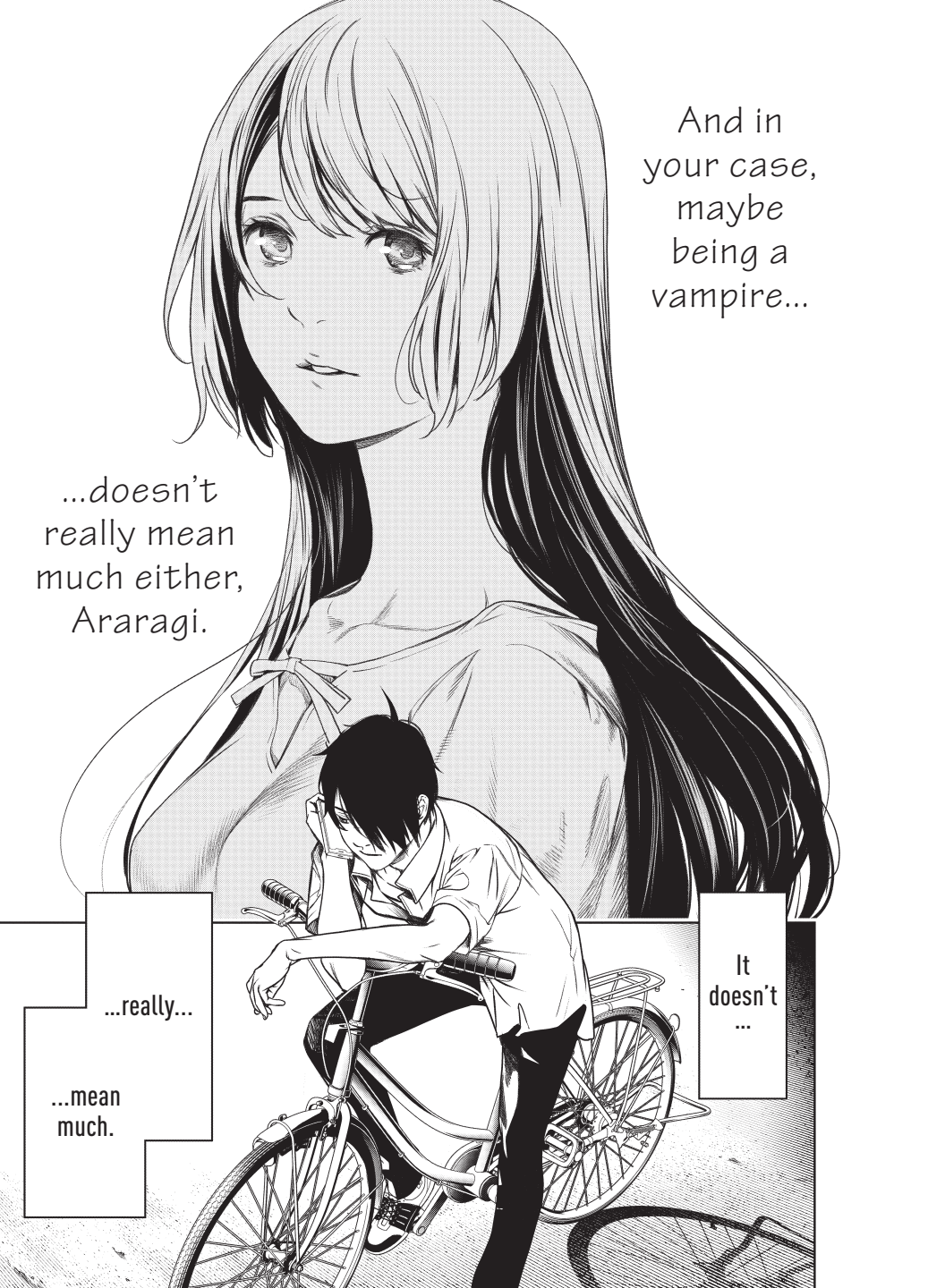
That being a vampire didn't really matter one way or the other.

That's...

...what she told me.

BAKEMONO
GATARI
OSHINO OMEMI
17

BAKEMONOGATARI 17


And in your case, maybe being a vampire...
...doesn't really mean much either, Araragi.
It doesn't ...
...really...
...mean much.

Thanks, Senjo-gahara.
I, um...
Well...
She'd only said what was on her mind.
If I weren't me—
If I weren't the person I'd become after experiencing Hell over spring break, I doubt the words would have meant much at all.
You don't seem to get it, Araragi.
If you're going to thank me,
do it with words that would cause me to jump with joy.

It was as if—

Which is why—

it makes me think.

What Senjogahara said then—those words.

I'll save those for our date.

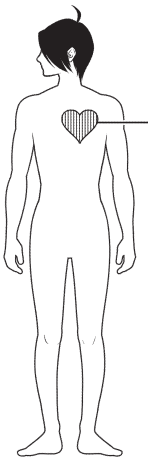
My, how much more of a masochist can you be?

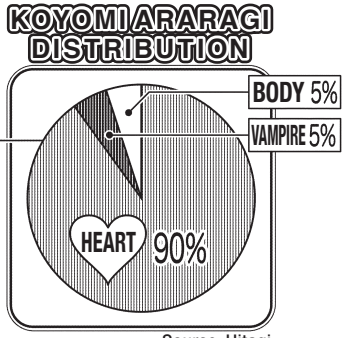
I can't believe you're raising the bar that high for yourself.

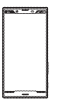
BOOK

It was as if...

...those words were a kind of destiny prepared for me and me alone.



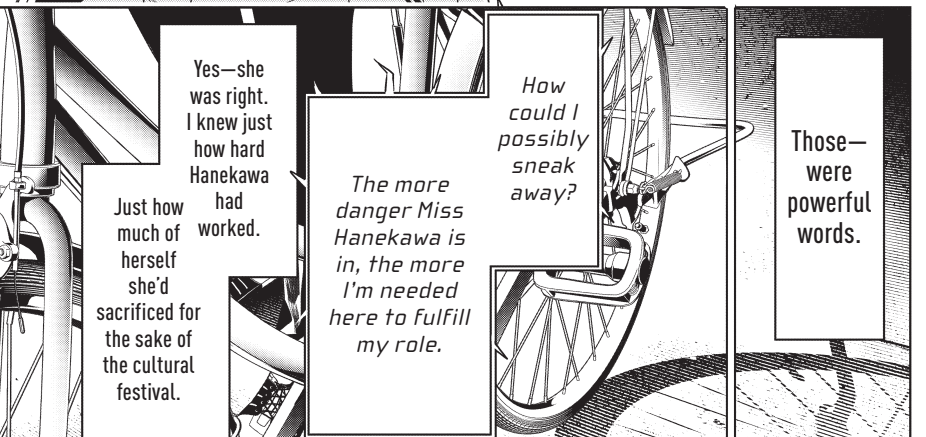




EXIT

All that said—what's going on, Araragi?
Is there some connection between you suddenly bringing up this subject and why Miss Hanekawa left early?
Er...
Well...
It's fine—you don't have to answer.
Either way, I can't help you.

Miss Hanekawa entrusted me with this.


Those—were powerful words.
How could I possibly sneak away?
The more danger Miss Hanekawa is in, the more I'm needed here to fulfill my role.
Yes—she was right. I knew just how hard Hanekawa had worked.
Just how much of herself she'd sacrificed for the sake of the cultural festival.

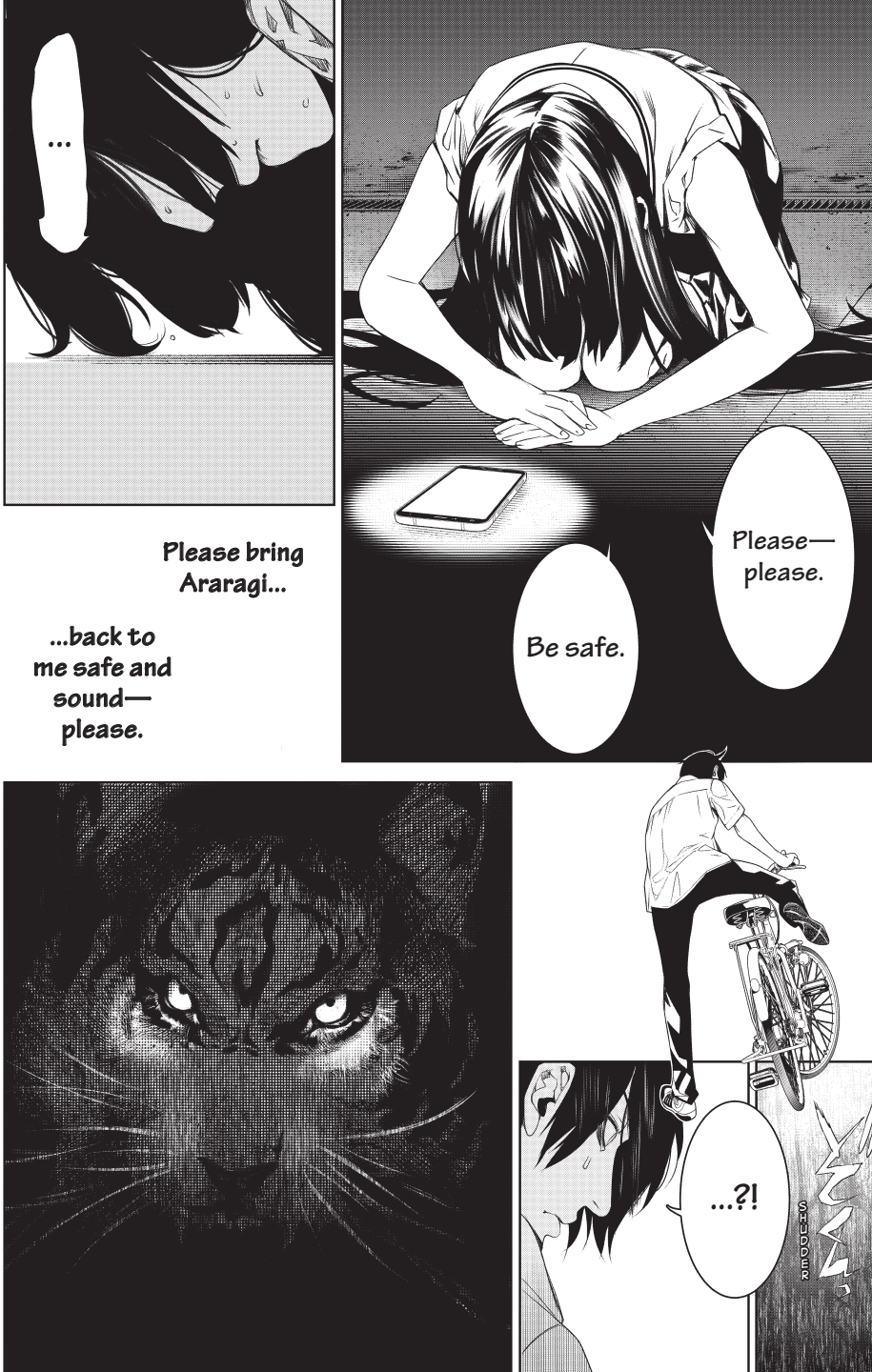
And on top of that,
she barely let a whiff of that out to the rest of the class.
Though it had only been a few hours—Senjogahara had now done the same work as Hanekawa, so she'd be the only person who could understand.
...
Okay.
You just need to do...
...what you always do.
And I'll do what I always do.
You're right.
As vice-president, I'll leave what's happening at school to you.
Let's make this a good cultural festival.
Yes—I'd like that.
I'll call you again later.

Hm ?
Your tsun-dere bonus.
Just one more thing, Araragi?
Wait.

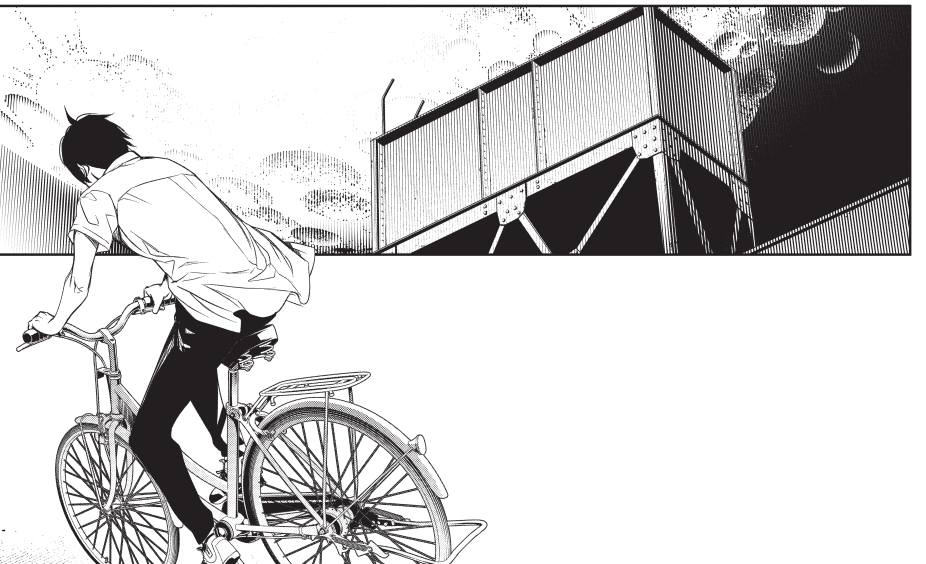
DON'T MISUNDER-STAND. IT'S NOT LIKE I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU OR ANYTHING.
BUT ...
...I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU IF YOU DON'T COME BACK, OKAY?

Hitagi Senjogahara
Call has ended
BLIP
...
KER-KRASH
Ahh.
SHUNK
Ah—
Really.
Every time—seriously.
She's more tundra than tsundere, but...
Every word we exchange ...
...makes me love her more.
Like snow piling up...
...my love for her keeps on growing endlessly.

I will...
...if you're waiting for me like this.
Don't worry— I'll make it back.
...
Please.
SKETCH BOOK


...
Please bring Araragi...
...back to me safe and sound— please.
Please— please.
Be safe.
...?!
SLOOOW

NO DUMPING



MISTER ARARAGI !!!
?!!
Hachi-kuji?!
SCREEEE

I'm so glad to see you!
I was looking for you, Mitser Araragi!
...I'm glad to see you, too.
But now you're just misspelling my title.

...
Is that so... Well, I've also seen one before.
I'm looking at one right now.

There was something important I forgot to tell you earlier.
So? What is it? What's got you so worked up?
I'm sorry.
Slip of the tongue.

You may find it hard to believe— but I saw a ghost!

This...
..."ghost"
...

I don't think normal people can see him.
He was out in the middle of the day, after all.

But I've never felt that afraid before.
I've spent a reasonably long time as an aberration myself.
AGHOOOST!
NOOOM
So ghosts really *do* exist...!
What about this ghost?
Does it have something to do with me?
I'm not sure if it has anything to do with you, Mister Araragi. But...
SQUIRM
ウズ
I'm a disgrace to my name for getting this many softballs and not knocking these jokes out of the park—but...
...this is no time for me to be engaging in some fun banter...
...And?

...the ghost...
...burned in the sunlight.
Then re-generated—and burned again.
All while staring at Shinobu—she said.
SZZ
SZZ
SZZ
GROOOAR
KRAKL
KRAKL
KRAKL

...I don't know if it's relevant here, but...
The ghost disappeared not long after.
Perhaps Miss Shinobu couldn't see him either—she didn't show any signs of concern.

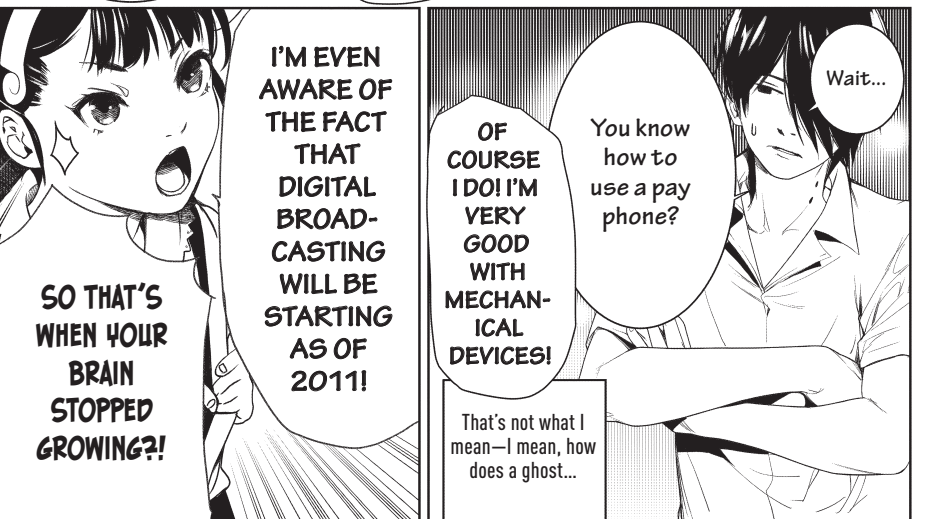
...
...something about him—looked lonely.
Almost like a lost child.
So...
Why were you in such a hurry, Mister Araragi?
Oh, right.
I wanted you to help me with some-thing...
UNDER-STOOD!
I'LL DO EVERY-THING IN MY POWER TO LOOK FOR MISS SHINOBU!

I'll contact you via pay phone if I find her.

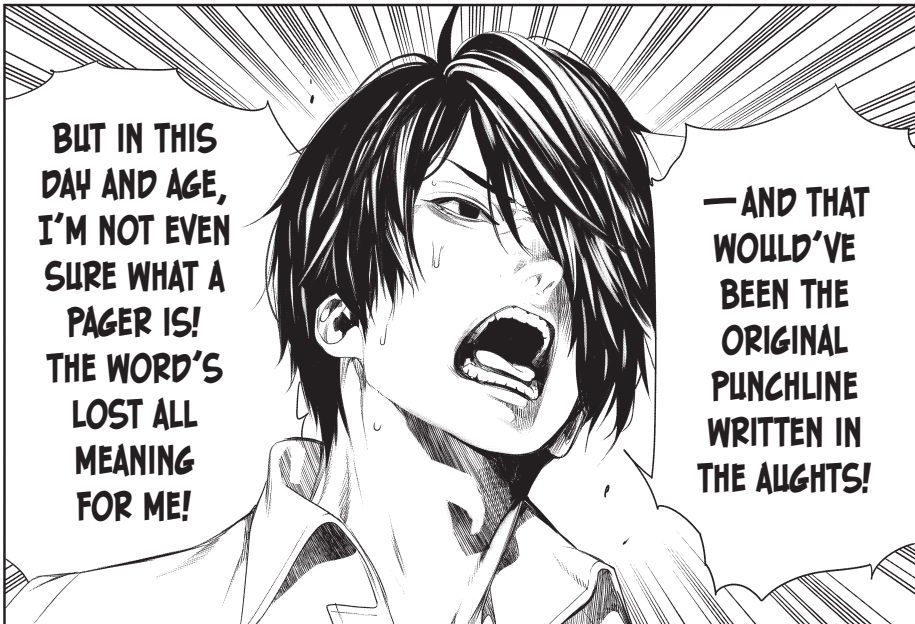
I AGREE, BUT YOU MEAN THAT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!

Though I admit that time is obsolescence.

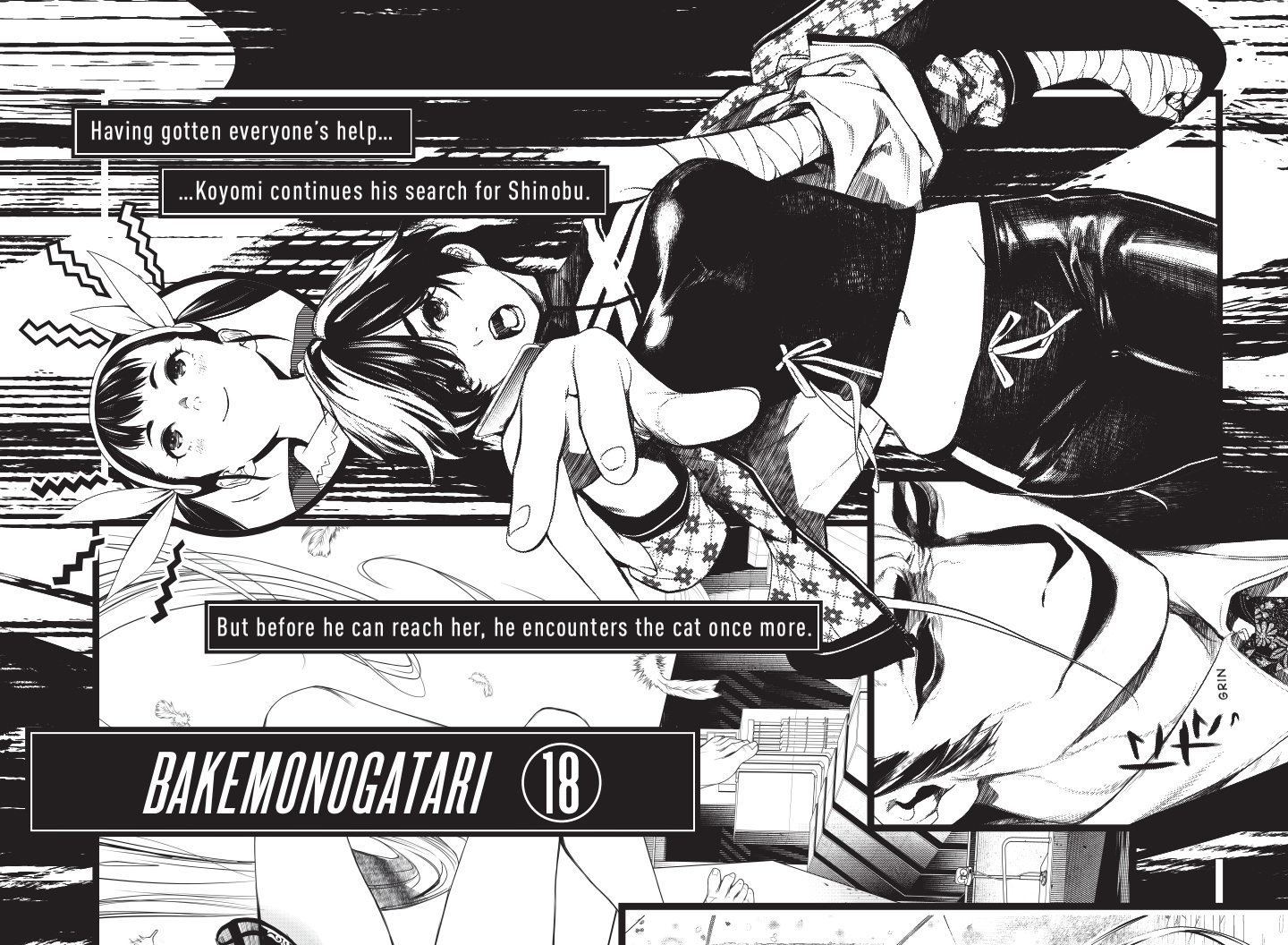
We must stay calm here.



A pager is something you use to keep your place in a book, right?
HEH HEH
SHE'S AN IDIOT!


BUT IN THIS DAY AND AGE, I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHAT A PAGER IS! THE WORD'S LOST ALL MEANING FOR ME!
—AND THAT WOULD'VE BEEN THE ORIGINAL PUNCHLINE WRITTEN IN THE ALGHTS!

Continued in Volume 18


Having gotten everyone's help...
...Koyomi continues his search for Shinobu.
But before he can reach her, he encounters the cat once more.
BAKEMONOGATARI 18
GRIN

Next Volume Preview

BAKEMONOGATARI (manga) 17

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Translation: Ko Ransom
Production: Grace Lu
Pei Ann Yeap
Hiroko Mizuno

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